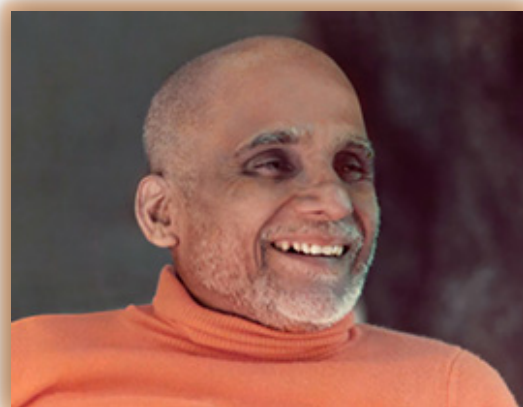


THE NATURE OF THE TRUE RELIGIOUS LIFE



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ABOUT THIS EDITION

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Publisher's Note

This is a series of lectures that Swamiji gave in the Ashram's Academy from March to May, 1981.

Chapter 1

WE ARE MYSTERIOUS SOMETHINGS

The Academy of Yoga and Vedanta has invited you for participating in a specific type of training, as you all know very well. When you applied for admission into this course, you had naturally an unintelligible feeling within that the way in which you are living in the world at present requires a streamlining and a reorientation. If this conviction or feeling were not to be there in your mind, you would not have tried to come here. There was a sort of inadequacy and lacuna that you felt in the way in which you lived in the world, though it might not have always been clear to you what that lacuna was, and what it was that you were lacking.

Often we feel unhappy without knowing why we are unhappy. This is a phenomenon through which many people pass. Suddenly we are depressed, and we feel that something is wrong with us, or something is wrong elsewhere, though it is not easy to know what is wrong and why is it that we are in a mood of dissatisfaction. This is a psychological phenomenon that requires deep investigation because every experience and every event that takes place in the world is inseparably connected with our own being. We are affected by our experiences and the events of the world because of our relationship with these. If we are unconnected with things, nothing can affect us. If the wind blows, we are affected; if rain

falls, we are affected; if somebody utters a word, we are affected. Even if anything happens in a distant country, it may have some unique impact upon us.

Practically there is nothing which cannot affect us. Even if something happens in a distant star which is some million light years away, the impact of this event may be felt by the Earth. The Earth, which is this revolving planet on which we are living, is one among the many pilgrims journeying in vast space, which fact astronomers can tell us in some detail. The Earth has colleagues in the vast space and it is, therefore, in a way, related to distant things which are invisible to the eyes. As we are inhabitants on the Earth, how could it be possible that the distant stars are not affecting us?

What is it that cannot affect us? The vast space and the inscrutable time seem to have something to say about every one of us. We have to slowly open our eyes to a new vista or vision of our relationship when we try to enter a school of education. We know very well how important education is. Else, we remain like an animal living with instincts. An education is an awakening to the facts of life to which we are oblivious, usually.

When we are born from the mother's womb, we come with no knowledge. Everything is dark, and some blind instincts such as hunger, sleep, etc., begin to operate. Our parents put us in school, saying that we require education. What do they mean by that? What is wrong with our stay in our own house? Why do we go to an educational institution? It is because the need is felt that an understanding of the intricate relationships that

obtain between us and others should be available to us; otherwise, we live like frogs in the well. When we are small children, we know nothing except our family members. This is my father, my mother, my brother and sister; that is all, and we are not concerned with anything else.

When you begin to get introduced into your relationship with the community outside, education starts. Education begins the moment you begin to realise that you are not confined only to the family – parents, brothers, sisters, etc. The art of conducting yourself harmoniously in relation to the community and the people outside the family may be said to be the beginning of education. You know very well how important it is to be harmoniously coordinated with people outside the family also.

Then education expands. It is not enough if you know only your little community. You are introduced into the larger background of the geography and the history of the place in which you are living. All those who have gone to schools and colleges know how you have studied; otherwise, you know only your little village, or just a part of it. Your comprehension expands in two ways. When you go to school and start your educational career, geographical and historical studies are primary. Go back to the old memories of your schooldays and imagine what you learnt at the very outset. I don't think you studied physics, chemistry, mathematics at the very beginning. There were simpler things, but very important things – a description of the physical location of your

own personality, the *taluka*, the district, the province. You are gradually introduced into a geography of your country. You do not study world geography so early. And then you are introduced into the historical antecedents of your life – this is India, this is America, this is Europe, this is this, this is that – and so many people lived before you. It is not only a few family members. You are awakened to a larger dimension of your relationship to people who were before you, and also to the area of land that is around you. But this is the kindergarten form, as it were, of the educational career, the beginning or seed form.

As I commenced by saying, your relationships do not exhaust themselves merely with a human history which you may study in your schools and colleges, because the Earth does not contain only human beings. We already know very well that this Earth is inhabited by things other than humans. When I say things other than humans, I do not merely mean animals and plants. There are more things on Earth than humans, animals and plants. There are invisible things. Forces which compel the Earth to rotate on its axis and revolve around the sun are invisible to the eyes. You can imagine the importance of this atmosphere in which you are living. What is it that compels the Earth to move? What is this motive force? Where is the dynamo that pushes it? If the Earth could be pushed with such vehemence by a power or a force that you cannot see with your eyes, can you say that you are not having the impact of this force when you are crawling on the surface of the Earth like an ant? Who can

say that this invisible force is not impinging upon you? Can you say that your life is controlled only by your family members or your historical personages, or even the geographical atmosphere?

This little history of humanity, this geography, this family, this great thing that you speak of as world problems and world issues, looks so small, petty, meaningless and laughable when you awaken yourself to the presence of terrible forces which can push the very Earth in a particular direction. And when the Earth can be pushed with such force, what about this human history? Where are your great people, your Napoleons and Caesars? They go like a wisp of wind. They can be blown off like an ant. The great importance that you attach to the phenomenon of human processes called history looks meaningless before these giant forces which you cannot see with your eyes but can only infer by logical deduction.

Education is not merely studying things which you can see with your eyes. That is a gross form of education, but there is a subtle form, which is a study of inferences. For example, mathematics is not an object that you see as something visible to the eyes. You cannot see mathematics with the eyes, but you can conceive what it is. This conceptual learning which is mathematics is more valuable to your life than the gross things that you see with your eyes. You know very well how important mathematics is in life. This is one example I place before you to demonstrate that conceptual things and invisible things may be more important than visible things. Logic

and mathematics are the principle sciences, but they are not connected with physical objects. You can be logical and mathematical even with closed eyes; without seeing anything, without hearing anything, without having any physical contact with any object, you can be logical and mathematical. These conceptual sciences are, in a way, inferential sciences. You conclude that if two and two make four, the multiples also will be commensurate with this calculation. You cannot see this, but you can infer from a certain logical deduction drawn by syllogism.

Likewise is the case with the powers that determine the life of things. To reiterate what I told you earlier, our life is a bundle of relationships; it is not limited to our physical body. A little common sense will tell you that you exist in this world by coordinations, relationships and associations, etc., with other things in the world. Everything that you do, right from the morning to the evening, is nothing but an association that you establish with things outside in some way or the other. You cannot exist physically, independently, within your body. No one can exist without some sort of an atmospheric relationship. This atmosphere in which you are integrally placed – not mechanically placed, but very organically placed – is a very vast environment around you.

I can give a very humorous example to illustrate this. It is a very simple thing, but it will open your eyes to some startling facts. There is a watch, and it is supported by something. What is it that supports this watch? This little desk, this small table is the support of this watch. What is it that supports this small table? This floor. If the

floor were not there, the table would not be standing like this, and the watch would not be in this position. What is it that supports the floor? The beams underneath. If the beams were removed, the whole floor would collapse. What is it that supports the beams? The walls at the bottom. What is it that supports the walls? The Earth at the bottom. What is it that supports the Earth? Now you have to think a little bit. How is it that the Earth does not drop down somewhere? Without any support, it is hanging in space.

Nothing can hang in space. It is unthinkable. The sun and the moon and the stars and the planets are hanging in space without any support – nothing at the bottom, nothing from above such as a chain that can pull them up. The support of these unsupported masses of matter – the sun, the moon, stars, planets – the support of all these cannot be seen with the eyes. They are mutually related. One pulls the other; one determines the movement of the other. If a systematic logical or mathematical determination of the movement of the one by the other were not to be there, there would be a clash of planets. The Earth would have gone and hit the sun, or the moon would have dashed against something else. There is an orderly constitutional laying down of principles behind the movement of not merely the constituents of this solar system, but the Milky Way and the galaxies and the nebulae and what not, in which astronomers tell us we are like a speck of dust.

What is it that supports the Earth? The whole universe is supporting the Earth. The atmosphere of the

cosmos is supporting the movement of the Earth. And what is it that supports this watch? Oh, you will be surprised. This little watch is being supported by the entire cosmos, not by this little desk, as the carpenter may say. The carpenter's vision is very poor.

And that knowledge of the geographer or the historian is a little wider. The astronomer knows much more, but even he knows little because it is not enough if we say that there is a cosmic interrelationship of the masses of matter we call the planets, etc. It is merely a statement that the astronomer makes, that there is such a relationship. But why should there be such a relationship? Who ordained that such a relationship should be there? Who made this law that the sun should pull the Earth in a particular manner?

Here we come to a stop. Our education tells us nothing further. We hold our breath in utter ignorance and awe, and are completely flabbergasted and put in a state of consternation. We realise that we are really ignorant, in spite of our education.

When you know the limits of your own knowledge, you realise that your education has been nothing, a husk. When problems arise before you, you cannot solve them. A certificate that you have from a college is not going to solve your difficulties. It is a piece of paper with a little ink splashed on it, and you cannot appease your hunger with that paper. And if a terrible confrontation is there in front of you, this little paper is not going to be of any help to you.

What is it that is going to help you, finally? Here begins true knowledge, true education. Perhaps many of you must have felt there is something wrong with what you studied, and it is very inadequate. You are all educated persons, well-read people. I do not think that you are happy. Something tells you this is not sufficient; there is something lacking, and you have not been able to find out what it is, so you thought someone will tell you. I believe you will find someone who will tell you what you lack, because you are not unbefriended persons. You do not lack support or help in this world. You are not helpless people.

Many times you may feel, “I am unwanted, helpless, a poor nothing. Who cares for me?” This kind of feeling may sometimes enter into your minds. But be certain, at least from this moment onwards, that you are not a helpless nobody. Every moment you are seen by somebody. Millions of eyes are looking at you, and everything that you do is known everywhere, just as any occurrence at any part of your body is known to the whole body. If a stone hits the toe of your foot, it is not only the toe that knows that this event has taken place. The whole body knows that a stone has been confronted by the toe. This analogy will explain your relationship to things.

The universe is your family. Calcutta, America, New York – these are not your locations. This little example that I placed before you of the interrelationship of everything will reveal that you do not belong to a small nation, a country, a house, a parentage. Perhaps you do

not belong merely to this Earth, even. You should be happy to hear all this. “Oh, this is wonderful! I am not so poor and helpless as I appear. Do I belong to this universe, really? I thought I am only a citizen of Calcutta, Delhi or Bombay. I thought I am only a poor nobody living in a hut in Rishikesh. This is what I was thinking. Now I know it is not so. Do I belong to this Earth? I thought I am only a citizen of a small village. Now I am told I belong to this whole Earth. Wonderful! I am told something more. I am not only of this Earth, I belong to the solar system.”

What a beautiful thing to hear! Your digestion will improve at once without medicine from a doctor because you become so happy. “Is it so? Am I a friend of everybody? The sun knows my existence. He will take care of me. How beautiful! If I am falling sick, the whole world will come and help to relieve me of my illness. Doctors will run to me. Why should I run to doctors?” The world will be at your feet. Why should you be after the world?

Don't you think that you are protected by your family when you have any difficulty? If you are unable to get up from your bed, the mother comes, the father comes, the brother comes, the sister comes. Everybody comes: “My dear boy, what has happened to you? What can I do for you?” Don't you think that everybody in the family is concerned because you are not able to get up from the bed due to a little headache? Why is it so? Why is it that all people are running to you? Because you belong to

them. Like this, if you know that you belong to this world, why should the world not come to you?

I told you, you do not belong merely to this Earth; you belong to a larger atmosphere of the whole universe. All the citizens of the cosmos will run to you to help: “My dear boy, what can I do for you?” If you hear these things, you will simply go mad. Your brain will cease to function. The joy which will inundate you will come in such a flood that you will not be able to open your mouth afterwards. “What a poorling I was! What an idiotic life I was living up to this time, thinking that I am a little boy, little girl of this and that place, etc. Am I eligible for support, protection and care from the forces of the universe, if the truth is that I am interrelated to all the forces – the cosmic rays and everything else?” You are a citizen of realms which are invisible to the eyes.

Modern physics says that this world is not a realm of three dimensions. We have been told this again and again, and this has been dinned into our ears, that this world is not a world of three dimensions – of length, breadth and height only, as it appears to our eyes. They say these three dimensions are only an illusion of a four-dimensional complex, which is the reality. Our brain has never been able to understand what this fourth dimension is, just as when we dream we cannot know what is waking.

In dream a teacher may come and give a lecture and tell us there is such a thing called waking, but we will never understand what it is until we wake up. What is the use of going to a dream college and learning dream

lessons from a dream professor in the dream world? Whatever he says has no relevance to reality because waking is something different from whatever is told and heard in the dream world. Such is the learning that we have. Whatever is told to you has no sense finally because all this knowledge is connected to this three-dimensional world, which, we are told, is not the true world. It is not the true world, and what we learn from it is also not truth. We can only infer the presence of a fourth dimension. In the dream world we can only infer that there is such a thing called waking. We cannot see it with our eyes.

Finally, philosophy and all deeper studies appear to be inferences drawn by comparison with certain ultimate possibilities, because the inference is not possible unless there is a syllogism; and for that, there should be a premise. Without a premise, there is no deduction. So you cannot infer anything, such as that there is a fourth dimension, etc., unless there is a premise to hang your arguments on. What is this premise? What is this indubitable referee which you can consult, and from which you can draw enlightenment to understand other things? Knowledge is an association of facts, and to make associations possible, there must be some background. You cannot have only associations without a connecting link between the parts which are associated. When there is such a thing called flying, there must be something that flies. You cannot have only flying without something that flies. So you cannot have associations, relationships, etc., without items which are related or associated. Likewise,

you cannot have a comparison or an inference drawn without some point of reference which will determine the conclusions to be drawn by these associations, logical arguments, etc.

Rene Descartes, a philosopher of France, argued like this in his book called *Metaphysical Meditations*. All philosophers think like this, and many of you may be thinking like this sometimes. Everything seems to be doubtful and unclear: "I cannot come to any definite conclusion about anything. This may be true, or that may be true. This may be true, or may not be true. How can I be sure of anything? What is the guarantee that what I see with my eyes is true? I may be in an illusion. Who tells me that this is truth? Who tells me whether I am in a real world or in a phantasmagoria? Am I waking or am I dreaming? Are my conclusions correct or are they not correct? Is there anything indubitable in this world? Is there anything which I cannot doubt, or is everything only a heap of doubts?" The philosopher went on arguing thus.

In India, Acharya Sankara started arguing in this way when he wrote his introduction to the famous commentary on the Brahma Sutras. If everything can be a matter of doubt, naturally there must be someone who is doubting everything. The doubts are not the doubters. The doubter is different from the doubt. You cannot have only doubts without somebody who doubts just as, as I told you, you cannot have merely a flying process without something that flies. Everything is doubtful, says the doubter.

Now, can you doubt the fact that there is such a thing called doubt? Please listen to me very carefully. You can doubt everything, but you cannot doubt the fact that you are doubting. If you doubt that you are doubting, doubt does not exist; therefore, the fact that the doubter exists cannot be doubted. Everything can be doubted, but the existence of the doubter cannot be doubted. If the doubter also is doubted, there is no such thing called doubt. The whole thing is swept away.

“So there is something which is indubitable, a doubtless fact. The fact that I doubt cannot itself be doubted. This is a strong point for me,” said Rene Descartes. And Sankaracharya tells us in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras that the denier cannot deny himself. If the denier also denies himself together with all the things that he denies, the denial also goes; therefore, there is no such thing called denial. So the negator cannot be negated; the doubter cannot be doubted. There is some stronghold left for you in this doubtful world, and the stronghold is that you remain as a doubtless something.

What are you? What do I mean by saying that I exist as a doubtless something? What is this I? This was the analysis of Rene Descartes in France, and also of Sankaracharya. I believe all great men think alike, whether they belong to the East or the West. They belong to a different brotherhood altogether; they have no nationality.

This is something very interesting. I have come to confront something very valuable in my life. Perhaps

there is a way of knowing what truth is. I have come to only one conclusion, finally, that though everything may be suspicious, doubtful and indeterminable, there is something which can be determined, and cannot be doubted. That is I myself. I cannot doubt that I am here. If I doubt that I am here, there must be somebody else to doubt that fact. So there is something behind which does not allow any doubt to enter into its constitution. I am. This cannot be doubted.

Who can doubt that he is? However much you may doubt everything, you cannot doubt that you exist. You know very well, "I am." Well, everything may be doubtful but that "I am" is not doubtful. It is very clear. But what is meant by "I am"? You imagined that you are the son or daughter of some father or mother, and now I told you that you are not merely that. Similarly you are imagining that you are this six-foot body, and now you will realise that you are not that either. This is another truth that will be revealed to you. You are not really this six-foot frame; there is something else inside you.

There are stages which you are passing through where the physical body is discounted and is not necessary. For example, when you are dreaming, the body is not there as an object of your perception. You can dream even without the body. Did you exist in dream? Yes. Was the body there? No. So can you exist without the body? Yes, it follows that you can exist without the body. So does it follow that you are the body? It follows that perhaps you are not the body. It follows, because you could be there dreaming without the body

also. Very simple. In a few seconds, you realise that you are not the body by the analysis of the phenomenon of dream where you could be as a pure mind thinking without relationship to the body. So, what is your conclusion now? “I have come to the conclusion that I can exist without the body and, therefore, I am not the body. It is very clear.”

Then what else are you? “Well, from the fact of dream, it amounts to saying that perhaps I am a mind that thinks, because in dream there is only a mind. I now realise that I am not the body because I could dream in the mind, through the mind, as a mind in dream without the body.”

But in deep sleep, where was the mind? It was not working. Were you existing in sleep? Certainly. Did you exist in sleep? Yes. Was the body there? No. The mind? No. What were you then? Very strange! “I was in sleep; yes, of course. I did exist. But I did not exist as a body, and I did not exist as a mind also.” How could you know that you existed in sleep when you knew nothing in sleep? There was no body, no mind, nobody to think anything. Then who is telling that you are existing in sleep? But you are still sure that you slept. You told me yesterday, “I had a good sleep.” Who is telling this? Not the body. Do not say the body is saying this, because it was not there. Even the mind is not saying that, because the mind is not working. Who is saying that there was a good sleep yesterday night? Now go deep into this fact. You are a mystery.

These little people sitting in front of me are mysteries. They are not boys and girls. They are not these bodies, minds. They are not human beings, therefore. If you are not the body and not the mind as it could be known through this little analysis of waking and dream, you come to the conclusion that you are not human beings at all. Well, if to be a human being is to be associated with a mind and a body of this nature, if you are associated with a human body and a human way of thinking, you say, "I am a human being." But in the state of deep sleep, you could exist without the association of the body and the mind; therefore, you could be without association with the nature of the human being himself. So in deep sleep you did not exist as a human being merely, and your essential nature, therefore, transcends humanity. This is another great mystery that is revealed about you.

Don't forget what I told you. I have told you a lot within these few minutes, and if you could remember these things with clarity of thought, perhaps I need not speak to you again. What I told you today is enough for you for a whole year, but it will not remain in the mind. It will slip the moment you go out the door. So be careful. It will slip out of your mind.

I have now brought you to the conclusion that you are a mysterious something which is dissociated from the body and the mind. What it is, and what further conclusions follow from this interesting analysis, we shall refer to another time.

Chapter 2

UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF DEEP SLEEP

Now bring your mind back to where we left yesterday, and continue the thread of the analysis. A study of the phenomena of waking and dream has given us an indication that we are perhaps neither the body nor the mind.

A very strange circumstance seems to overtake us when we are fast asleep. Very few might have found time to contemplate the mystery and the enigma that is hidden behind this experience called sleep. We generally just go to sleep, as if everything is fine and it is all a simple affair, but it is not so simple as it appears. There is an indescribable satisfaction that follows our entry into the state of deep sleep. Everyone knows the importance of getting into the state of sleep. It brings us not merely a novel type of satisfaction incomparable with the joys of the world, but it energises us. Even a sick person wakes up with a new strength and a rejuvenated spirit, a result that follows spontaneously by the mere fact of your having gone to sleep. It is difficult to understand from where we receive this energy when we have eaten nothing in sleep – no vitamins, no injections. We have come in contact with nothing which we can call an object

of the world. There was practically no relationship with any type of objective existence. Yet the satisfaction of sleep is superior to every other delight that we may be familiar with through contacts of senses with physical objects. From where has this joy arisen, and how come that we are energised and seem to receive a strength of our own? No one can know how this happens and why it should be like that.

But before we try to seek an answer to this difficult question, we should pursue the chain of the argument that we followed yesterday. When we are fast asleep, we are not bodies, we are not minds. It is very clear that even in dream, we seem to be operating as individuals independent of bodily connection; but in sleep we seem to be existing even without the activity of the mind. Minus the body and minus the mind, what are we?

Physiology and psychology get exhausted in the body and the mind, and therefore, you seem to be in a condition of sleep, which physiology and psychology cannot touch. Therefore, physiologists, doctors, medical men, biologists cannot understand you. Nor can psychologists understand you, because you can exist independent of the area which is accessible to the psychologist or the medical man. But in what condition do you exist in sleep? Perhaps you would be able to conclude that you did not exist even as a human being there. You never felt that you were a man, that you were a family individual. You never knew that you belonged even to this Earth itself. It was a state of utter

unawareness. I knew nothing. This is what everyone says when he wakes up from sleep.

Now, this is not a very simple statement that a person makes. You are making a very significant statement when you say, "I knew nothing." You are saying this without knowing what you are saying, like a child blabbering a great truth without being able to probe into the intricacies of it. We merely blurt out that we knew nothing. But if you make a judicial enquiry into this statement, you will find that you have been caught by this very statement. If you knew nothing, how could you say you knew nothing? One who knows nothing cannot even make a statement that he knows nothing because it is a contradictory statement. An obliteration of awareness automatically precludes any statement regarding it, because no statement is possible unless there is an awareness precedent to the statement. You cannot have a statement made about a condition of which you have no experience. You cannot say anything about what you have not experienced in some form or the other, positively or negatively. You had an experience of sleep; no one would deny that. "Yes, I did sleep."

This memory, or remembrance, of the fact of having slept is a great clue to a secret of your own existence. Here we have a key to open the door of a great enigma. Argue logically, very leisurely, without any emotions and without any presuppositions. The memory of having slept is a result that follows from your experience of having slept, because memory is nothing but a recollection of a past experience. When you say, "I

remember something,” you mean that you can recollect having passed through a condition of some sort or the other.

To have a memory of an experience, you must have had an experience. And what is ‘experience’? Experience is a conscious undergoing of a process, a state of affairs, which becomes a content of your awareness. Where there is no awareness, there is no experience. We do not speak of experience where consciousness is completely absent. There is no experience when there is no consciousness. And if in sleep, as you are likely to believe, there was absolutely no consciousness, there cannot be any experience of it; and if there is no experience, there cannot be any memory of it.

Now, the fact of memory indicates there ought to have been some sort of an experience in which consciousness was hidden, latent or patent. We cannot observe the phenomenon of consciousness in sleep. We can only infer. When we see muddy water in the Ganga, we infer there must have been rain uphill. We have not seen the rain, but we conclude it must have been raining; otherwise, the water would not be muddy.

There is a very interesting analogy which epistemologists sometimes bring forward to substantiate the logical conclusions we arrive at by this sort of reasoning: There is a person who never eats throughout the day. You never see him eating even once, right from morning till the night, but you find him becoming bulkier and bulkier, stouter and stouter every day. He is putting on weight. How is it possible if he never eats? So

you infer he must be eating in the night; otherwise, how could it be possible that a person becomes heavier and stouter and healthier by eating nothing? This argument is called *arthapatti* in epistemological circles. Likewise, the memory of having slept soundly brings out the truth that this memory would have been impossible had there been no consciousness whatsoever. You would have not existed at all if there was nothing left. But you know that you existed. How could you know that you existed unless there was some sort of an awareness? Here is a very important point for you to probe into. And the study is not yet complete.

This awareness that you existed in sleep is not conditioned either by the mind or the body by any sort of objective phenomenon. Neither the physical nor the psychological world was there to limit this awareness. It was, therefore, a pure principle of an unlimited awareness. It is unlimited because it is not restricted by either mental phenomena or physical phenomena. Apart from this fact of its having been unrestricted by the mind and the body, the very nature of consciousness would reveal that it cannot be limited by any external presence.

The study of consciousness is the most difficult of studies because it cannot become an object of study. Consciousness can never become a thing visible to the senses, or even cognisable by the mind, because of the fact that consciousness precedes the operation of the mind and the senses. It is the experiencer and, therefore, it cannot be experienced as an external to its own self. "A" cannot become both a subject and an object at the

same time. Consciousness is always a subject, and it is the seer, the hearer, the toucher, the experiencer and the knower of everything.

The consciousness in which state you existed in the state of deep sleep is not capable of limitation by anything that exists anywhere because – listen to me very carefully here – the very awareness of the presence of limitation would prove that awareness is beyond limitation. When you say there is a boundary and a limitation to a particular thing, you are aware at the same time there is something beyond the boundary. The consciousness of limitation implies an awareness of that which is beyond the limit. Hence, even to imagine that consciousness can be limited, consciousness should be beyond limitation.

And also, you cannot imagine that consciousness can be divided into parts. It cannot be segmented or partitioned because to imagine that there can be parts in consciousness would be to imagine simultaneously that there could be a gap of space between one part and another part. But who is there to know there is a gap between one part and another part? Nobody can know it except consciousness itself. So consciousness should be present even midway between the two imagined parts, which means to say parts are impossible in consciousness.

What does follow from all these analyses? Consciousness is not capable of division. It is indivisible. It is impartite; it is limitless. This is only an inference we can draw. Actually, we cannot see or experience it, for an

important reason which will be the subject of our studies a little later.

This fact of your having somehow or other stumbled upon an indivisibility and an unlimitedness is the source of your joy in sleep. Why are you so happy when you go to sleep? Because knowingly or unknowingly, you have been enthroned in the kingdom of the Absolute, but you are blindfolded. You have been lifted by some power and placed in the context of a limitless being, only you are prevented from being aware of this fact. Suppose somebody blindfolds you, covers your eyes tightly, does not allow you to see anything, and lifts you and places you on the throne of an emperor. You would not know that you are seated on the throne, though it is true that you are on it.

The Upanishads give another analogy: Going into the state of deep sleep is something like a person walking over a treasure every day, not knowing that he is walking over it. There is a treasure trove under the earth, and every day you are walking over it. What is the use of walking over it when you do not know that it is there – or being very wealthy, very rich, but not being aware that you are so? Therefore, you can know the importance of awareness. Your being anything would convey no meaning to you if your consciousness is not attached to it. Therefore, the greatest principle and reality of the universe is consciousness. Minus consciousness, everything is a corpse. All your possessions, all your relationships, all your wealth and glory amount to nothing when consciousness is dissociated from it. To be

a king is to be conscious that one is a king. To be rich is to be conscious that one is rich. To be anything is to be conscious that one is that thing. Minus consciousness, nothing is.

Hence, the deep potentiality of an indivisibility of being into which you are taken in the state of deep sleep brings you an indivisible happiness. The happiness of sleep is incapable of limitation. If an emperor who rules the whole Earth cannot sleep for one year, he would rather sleep and not be an emperor than be an emperor without sleep, because in sleep you go to your own self. In waking and dream you move away from yourself. There is an aberration of consciousness. In a philosophical style, you may say in waking and dream you move towards the not-Self. In sleep you go towards the Self.

Now, you will be wondering how such an energy and such a satisfaction can follow from an entry into one's own Self. While the common belief is that happiness is due to the contact of the consciousness with the object, the common-sense view is that the powers and the joys of life are the results of coming in contact with the things of the world. But you say a different thing altogether. The joys of the world are not true joys. They are a sort of make-believe into which you are diverted by a peculiar circumstance in which you get involved. Why do you feel happy when you have a desirable object under your possession? You may be under the impression that the object gives you joy: "I have this possession; I am so happy." Possession makes you happy. Even the thought

of a dear object brings you joy, and when you see the object with your eyes, it brings you greater joy. When the object comes nearer you, it is a still greater joy. When the object is under your control and possession, it is indescribable joy. When the object has become part of your nature – you have become one with it, you have absorbed it into your being, it is no more outside you – you go mad with joy. So joy is the union of the subject and the object. The nearer the object comes to you, the greater is your satisfaction in respect of it.

Think over this phenomenon once again. You are happy because you have a consciousness of your having come in union with the object. It is not enough if merely the object is placed on your lap, minus a consciousness of it. There must be an inward organic association with it. The governor of the Reserve Bank or the Bank of England cannot be said to be very happy because he has millions of pounds or rupees in his hand. He has a control over a large sum of currency because he is the governor of the Bank of England, but he is getting a petty salary like anybody else. There is no organic connection between the object on which he is sitting or the object which is on his lap or head, while the organic connection is with a very small circle. Hence, a mere physical contact with an object cannot bring joy. If you hold the purse of someone else in your hand, it cannot bring you joy. It must be your purse. Another's purse will only bring dissatisfaction and agony and insecurity.

So the coming into contact with an object is not enough. There must be a conscious participation in the

existence of that object. Again we come to the phenomenon of consciousness. You can imagine how important it is. If your consciousness cannot organically participate in the presence of the object, you would not derive any satisfaction from it. And even if it remains outside you as a disconnected object, you would not be satisfied. There should be an inward relationship between the object desired for and the subjective awareness. You know this very well as experienced people in this world. There can be a deep dissatisfaction of a few members within the family if there is no inward relationship among them, notwithstanding the fact that one is only a few inches away from the other. One would not like to speak to the other and their face is turned away from that person, even if they are physically touching. So physical contact is not enough, and that is not the cause of your joy. It is an entry of consciousness into the object and the object's participation in the structure of your consciousness that becomes the source of satisfaction. So how does it follow that the object brings joy in the world? They do not bring any joy. You are under an illusion.

What happens is this. When there is a desire for any particular thing in the world, consciousness moves out in space and in time through the channel of the mind and the senses in the direction of that object. When consciousness moves out of yourself, you have gone out from your own self. There is a self-aberration of yourself. You are no more yourself. When you love an object, when you think deeply of an object with a longing for it,

you have transferred your personality to that object. The subject has become an object. You have become somebody else, and there can be nothing worse for you. To lose yourself and transfer yourself into the position and the structure and the context of another would be to become a slave of that thing, to sell yourself into that, and to lose your existence itself. When the subject enters into the object by desire through the movement of consciousness channelising itself through the mind and the senses, there is a loss of self-consciousness.

What you call unhappiness is the same as the loss of self-consciousness. The more you love an object, the more you forget yourself. A person who is intensely in love with something else has no consciousness of his own self. He becomes mad practically. He becomes a crazy individual, losing self-control totally. This has become an unfortunate event in the mind of a person because one has lost oneself. We remember here the great saying of Christ: What good is it to gain the whole world and lose your own self? But everyone in the world is trying to do only this – to gain the whole world and lose one's own self.

We run after the things of world and would like to possess the things of the world, and even the sun and the moon, and Jupiter and Mars. It doesn't matter. We want only these; but we have lost ourselves. We have cut the ground from under our own feet and we are in a totally helpless condition, but we are not aware that this is happening to us. In the movement of the mind towards an object, therefore, there is a loss of Self, and the Self has

become the not-Self, the Atman has become the *anatman*. Then what happens? Great sorrow befalls us. A person who has desired an object but could not get it is in a very unfortunate state. What happens to the mind when the object comes nearer and is apparently possessed? The mind ceases to think of the object.

The necessity to think of the object ceases because of the satisfaction or the conviction that the object has come into one's own possession. When you cease from thinking of the object on account of the belief that you are in control of the object, the mind has returned to the Self. The mind returns to the Self; you come to the Self. The not-Self has come back to the Self under the notion that there is no further necessity to move into the not-Self. When you have entered into the Self, you have touched the border of this indivisible core that you are, about which we discussed a few minutes before as a state into which we enter in the state of deep sleep.

What happens in deep sleep happens also when you come in contact with loveable objects. The phenomenon is the same. When you go to sleep, you know nothing about yourself, and when you are in possession of the dearest object that you can think of, you are again in a state of deep sleep only, but of a different type. You are in a rapturous mood which cannot be described. "Oh, I have got it." And this feeling that you have got what you require has brought you back to yourself. This coming back to yourself is the source of your joy, and not the possession of the object physically. As I told you, a mere physical contact cannot bring you joy.

Hence, it is untrue that the world can give you joy. The joys of the world are only a phenomenon which arises on account of this peculiar inward mystery that operates behind the fact of our coming in contact with the objects. While we see an object, we do not know what is happening to the mind. So whether we are in a state of happiness in waking or we are in a state of happiness in sleep, we are in our own Self, and when we are unhappy, we have moved away from our Self. This Self cannot be an object. It has to be always a subject.

“Who can know the knower?” says the Upanishad: *Vijñātāram are kena vijānīyād* (Brihad. Up. 2.4.14). Who can see the seer? You cannot see your own eyes, because your eyes are they that see. And with a greater emphasis, it is true that consciousness cannot become an object of consciousness. Consciousness cannot become its own object because it is the knower of the objects; inasmuch as we have concluded by a study of the nature of consciousness that it is impartite, it is indivisible, it follows that it is universal. Anything that is indivisible is universal because to be divisible is to be involved in the relation of subject and object, and such a division is not possible in consciousness for the reasons already noted. This again will lead us to the conclusion that our essential core is universality and not particularity.

So when we go to sleep, what happens to us? We unconsciously touch the border of universality. That is why there is such a reaction set up and we suddenly get transformed into a superhuman state, as it were, and

come back with an experience which we cannot describe through words.

Now, if you connect what I told you today with what I told you yesterday, you will realise that the essential core of us as human beings is inseparable from the structure of the universe. Yesterday I told you something about the nature of the universe, and the possible relation that subsists between ourselves and the universe. Today I took you down deep into your own self, and here again we seem to realise that not only our external structure, but even our essential pith is inseparable from the pattern of the universe. We are organically connected to all things. Hence, when we come back to our own selves either by the phenomenon of the so-called possession of a dear object or by entering into sleep, we suddenly contact the whole universe, not knowing what is actually happening to us. But this experience is only for a flash of a moment. We cannot be happy for a long time. Even if we have the fortune of enjoying the greatest satisfaction of life, it cannot be a continued satisfaction. It has a beginning and an end; it has breaks in the middle. We cannot be always in that condition because this contact with the universal is not given to us for a long time, for various reasons.

The practice of yoga, about which you have heard so much, is nothing but this graduated attempt that you are making to come in contact with your deepest essence which is commensurate with the structure of the universe. In yoga you try to do two things at the same time: go deep into your own self, and to expand yourself

to all things. There is an increase in the dimension of your personality on one side, and there is an entry into the deepest essences of your being on the other side. So to go within very deep, and to go without very far, mean one and the same thing. This is why modern science which has tried to move externally and reach the farthest limit, as it were, of externality, has come to the very same conclusion which the ancient masters arrived at by an inward analysis. This is the meaning perhaps of the oft-quoted saying, "Thou art That. Know thyself and be free."

How could you be free by knowing your own self? You can have a little idea as to how this could be. Knowing your own self is not knowing yourself as a Mr. or a Mrs. You have already understood to some extent that you are not any of these things – neither a man nor a woman, not even a body, not even a mind, not even a human being you are. So to know your own self would be to enter into the impersonal quintessence of your being, which is also the quintessential essence of everything else. When you sink below the surface of a wave in the ocean, you have touched the ocean which is the root of all other waves at the same time. So is the case with you when you go deep into your own self. You have touched the depths of everybody in the world. So to know yourself is to know everybody at the same time. Wonderful is this discovery. To know yourself is to know everybody. If you know your self, you have known the whole creation.

Again to repeat, to go to a particular wave in the ocean is to know that which is at the root of every other

wave also, so to know that which is the deepest essence in you would be simultaneous with the knowledge of the deepest essence of the whole cosmos.

This will, to some extent, solve the great question of the existence of God, a problem that is generally discussed in the philosophy of religion. I have not mentioned the word 'God' up to this time. Now I bring you to this theme of a well-known interesting ideal which religions generally speak of as God. What is meant by it?

The analyses that we have conducted up to this time seem to be complete in themselves, yet there is some question which remains to be answered concerning the religious ideal of God-realisation, about which people speak so much and so many books are written. Often we are frightened by this word. We can be shaken from our roots by the very thought of a thing called the Almighty or the Godhead. We are frightened because of a subconscious suggestion that it is a terrific force, an incomprehensible power which we cannot confront with the apparatus of which our individuality is at present constituted. Normally we look upon God as an object of awe. It is a frightening Something. Religions have managed to keep us always in a state of awe by saying that God is above; the Father is in heaven; He is not on Earth. Because He is not on Earth, we seem very helpless. If our great Father is in heaven and he is not on Earth, we are wretched indeed. This brings a sort of fear, and we always look to the skies when we pray to God. We are introduced into these religious moods by the education that we have received through our families and our

schools and colleges and the traditions in which we are living.

The teachers of religion, both in the West and the East, have deeply considered this matter. Great thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, and even much earlier Plato, Aristotle and others, and in India Acharya Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhava and the teachers of the Vedanta philosophy have bestowed sufficient thought on the problem of the existence of God in its relation to the structure of the universe and the makeup of man. This consideration generally goes by the name of philosophy or, in a restricted sense, it is called metaphysics. The study of the relationship between God, world and soul is philosophy proper. It is the foundation of religion, and you cannot practice even yoga without knowing something about these things because when you do yoga, you must know what you are aiming at finally.

What do you want by yoga? Try to answer this question to your own self. You cannot have an easy answer to this query unless you analyse all these questions and problems threadbare so that all these issues of life become perspicuous before your mental eye and there is no doubt left in your mind.

Into this theme of the foundation of religious philosophy we enter now.

Chapter 3

THE RELATIONSHIP OF GOD, THE WORLD, AND THE INDIVIDUAL

The foundations of religion lie deep in the awareness of the relation that subsists among the primary principles of God, the world and the individual. A study of these ultimate truths often goes by the name of philosophy, metaphysics, ontology, theology, and so forth. God, the world and the individual – these sum up the principle scaffolding structure of every kind of study, or any branch of learning, for the matter of that. And all social relations that give rise to studies which are usually called humanities also come under the relationships mentioned already, namely, the mutual relation of individuals.

The other day I brought your mind to a point where it could concentrate upon the possible character of the Ultimate Reality. What is meant by 'Reality'? What is real? Great thinkers have bestowed enough thought on this question. Anything, any circumstance, any event or any phenomenon which has a tendency to transcend itself, to change itself, to transform itself or to undergo any kind of modification cannot be regarded as real in itself because self-satisfaction is a character of Reality, and the tendency to outgrow oneself, transcend oneself or move away from oneself is the opposite of it. You move from one place to another place because you are not satisfied with one place. If a particular point in space were all-in-all, complete in itself and self-satisfying, there

would be no need even for motion. But nothing in the world rests without motion. Everything moves, everything changes, and everything gets transformed into some other condition.

The urge for self-transformation and movement naturally is a direction taken in a particular manner. All movement is in a direction, whatever be the nature of the direction. The tendency of any organism or any substance in the world is towards the achievement of a purpose. The purpose of the movement of the river is to reach the ocean. The purpose of the cellular activity of living organisms is to build themselves up into a superior self-supporting individuality which can adjust and adapt to the environment of the world. Likewise, there is a purpose, an aim or a destination before the mind's eye of any kind of movement, consciously known or not known.

Since all transformation of any kind has to be regarded as a tendency to the achievement of a state where further transformation would not be necessary, logically we are led to the conclusion that nothing in the world can be called real because there is nothing in the world which does not change itself, transform itself, or tend towards something beyond itself. There is nothing in the world which has no desire of any kind. Even molecules and atoms seem to manifest a desire to reorganise themselves into a new pattern of molecules, etc. Every moment seems to be conditioned by a purpose, and this purpose is the Reality towards which transformation gets directed.

Though we cannot comprehend within our minds what Ultimate Reality can be, we can infer that such a thing has to be. It ought to be there if the processes of the world have to assume any meaning at all. Life loses sense and all significance and meaning if its movements and processes are not directed to a particular end or purpose. A sensible movement is a purposive movement. A purposeless movement cannot be regarded as significant in any manner. And what we call Reality is nothing but this purpose.

Now, this would also imply by way of a suggestion that Reality has degrees. How does it follow? It follows from the fact that every individual in the world cannot have a uniform consciousness or awareness of the purpose of life. It is true that everything has a purpose, and every person has an aim in view behind every kind of movement, activity or intention, but this purpose is not uniform in the intensity of its manifestation or the dimension of its comprehension. I have an aim in what I do, and you have an aim in what you do. It is very clear. Even if an ant is crawling on the floor, it moves in a direction with a purpose. If the wind blows and it rains, and the sun shines, there is some great purpose in these organic movements of nature. Granted. But my idea of my aim behind my activities every day, and your aims, and the ant's aims, and the aims of atoms and molecules may not be uniform in their nature, notwithstanding the fact there is a direction of everything towards a purpose or an aim.

The dissimilarity in the structural pattern of the purposes envisaged by different individuals would imply that there are degrees in the consciousness of Reality. Whether there are really degrees in Reality, or we are only encountering it in this manner, is a different question which we will touch upon a little later. However, for the time being it appears that everyone in the world is not thinking of a common purpose, at least in the outer form in which it manifests itself. But there is a basic similarity in spite of a dissimilarity in detail. This gives us some hint as to the fundamental character of Reality.

The foundational similarity among the purposes envisaged by individuals is that there is a subtle longing in everyone and in everything for a perfection which knows no limitation. Though we cannot define Reality in adequate terms in our own language, we can accept this much: It has to be a state of perfection where no dissatisfaction or inadequacy of any kind can prevail. This much we have to concede, though we may not be able to say much else about it. A state of perfection is an achievement of every conceivable objective, a union with every type of aim the mind can conceive. It may be an infinite expansiveness in power, dominion and possessions, and an infinite expansion in time process, a deathless or an infinitely prolonged length of life, and a satisfaction which is of the most intense nature. We may confine ourselves at present to these three features, at least, of what we may call perfection.

If there is anything outside you which will limit your operations, to that extent you may say you are not perfect. Where there is a freedom given to you to have infinite operations and there is nothing to limit you, you may be said to be spatially infinite. Spatial limitation and temporal limitation are the basic limits set to your activities and your existence. The presence of space includes or implies the presence of persons and things other than yourself, so you look very small. You are just one individual among many others. You are terribly limited to this little body. Very finite you are, on account of the presence of other finites. The existence of other finites is a limitation put upon a particular finite. Also, the limitation of time imposed upon any finite object limits it durationally or temporally. There is death or destruction of every finite object.

Now, you would not like to be involved in these things if you are given utter freedom. You would wish not to be destroyed and not to be subjected to the abolition of your finitude by the hands of death; and you would also not wish to be limited by the presence of other persons, other individualities, other things in the world. This desire within the individual indicates again the nature of the purpose or aim towards which individualities are moving, a perfection which will try its best to break the boundaries of space and overcome the limitations of time.

Hence, a uniform character of all the purposes of all individuals, irrespective of their differences in detail, would be that state where space and time would be

overcome. None of us can even imagine what it would be to exist in a state beyond space and time. Whatever be the extent to which you scratch your head, you will not be able to understand what it is to be beyond space or beyond time because nobody has gone beyond space, and no one has overcome the limitations of time.

But there is an urge within; there is a longing inside which refuses to restrict itself to the heavy limitations imposed upon it by space and time. This great purpose of the universe can be regarded as the Ultimate Reality of things. Religions call this Reality as God. In Sanskrit terminology in India, this great Reality is sometimes designated as Ishwara, the Supreme Substance, the Absolute, so called because there is nothing external to it. It is not related to anything else.

Every finite is related to every other finite by way of mutual action and reaction. Inasmuch as here is a state where relations of any kind are completely obviated on account of its transcendence of space and time, we call it the Absolute. It is so called because it is non-relative. The Absolute is a term that we use for a state of existence which is free from relations of every kind because of freedom from external contacts.

We are generally told by adepts in this lofty thinking that the Supreme Being is free from three kinds of limitation. There are three kinds of limitation, which are called in Sanskrit *sajatiya bheda*, *vijatiya bheda* and *svagata bheda*. *Bheda* means difference. There are three kinds of difference in the world. The first one is what is called *sajatiya bheda*. *Jati* means a class, a category, a

species. *Sajatiya* means that which pertains to a species, a class or a category. So there is one kind of difference which pertains to class, category or species. What is meant by this?

All people belong to one species, called humanity. We are all human beings, but there is difference among ourselves, and this does not require any explanation. You all know how one person is different from another person, though all persons belong to one category only, one species of mankind or humankind. All trees belong to the category of trees, but one tree is not the same as another tree in every respect. So this is one kind of difference – a distinction that obtains within the individuals of one particular category. This does not obtain in the Absolute. This *sajatiya bheda* which we see in this world is not to be seen in the Supreme Being because the Absolute is not one individual belonging to a species.

The other difference is *vijatiya bheda*, the difference that obtains between one species and another species. Man is different from an animal, a human being is different from a plant, and so on and so forth. The distinction that obtains between one species and another, one category and another category, one class and another class of beings, is *vijatiya bheda*. This also does not obtain in the Absolute because there is nothing external to the Absolute.

The third kind of difference is called *svagata bheda*. *Svagata* means intrinsic difference. The right hand is different from the left hand, the head is different from

the feet, the heart is different from the lungs, and so on. These are limbs of a particular individual. Parts of a single organism differ one from the other, notwithstanding the fact they belong to a single organism. So, differences that obtain among parts of a single organic body are called *svagata bheda*. This does not obtain in the Absolute because the Absolute has no internal parts. The Supreme Being has no internal difference, no external differentiation, and no distinction of class or category or species.

And it is that which persists in the past, present and future. What is Reality? Truth or Reality is that which is persistent uniformly in the past, present and future. As you know in this world there is nothing which can persist in a uniform manner in the past, present and future, it appears the world does not contain Reality. It would follow in some way that if the Supreme Being is of this nature as defined now, and you cannot see anything in this world which is of this nature, God has to be beyond the world.

The consequences of this concept of the transcendence of God as an extra-cosmic Creator beyond the world will be studied by us afterwards. This leads to the various religious philosophies of the country, of the whole world.

This much you may have to remember today as regards the nature of the Ultimate Reality; but there is a thing called the world. You can see it before your eyes. The world insists that its existence should be recognised. You cannot say “no” to it. The processes of nature

compel you to accept its existence. There is a thing called the world outside you. Though deep philosophical analysis has led you to another conclusion that there is something beyond the world, yet there is a thing called the world. What is the connection between the world and this great Reality that you have studied by analysis just now?

In one sentence, I told you that often it appears that the Real is not in this world because of its Supreme non-exclusive character. If it is transcendent totally, it would bear no relation to the world. If that which is called Real is not to be visualised, seen or recognised in anything in this world which is subject to transformation, change and death, you cannot conceive of any kind of relationship between God and the world. If that is the case, you and I, involved in this world, cannot reach God. The aspiration for God would be a futile attempt because you have already decided that there is no connection between you and God. There are some philosophers who feel that this is the state of affairs, to which we shall revert again later on. This is frightening, and will put you out of balance in one second. If all our hopes are hopeless and all our desires are a cry in the wilderness, if all our activities are working in a dream and all our ambitions are a phantasm, man can go mad in one second.

But there is something implanted in man himself which does not believe that this is the final state of affairs. The aspiration within man is proof enough of the possibility of a permanent relationship between the world and Reality. No human being can rest contented

with the conclusion that God is totally transcendent to the extent of a severance of relationship with the world. Whatever be your reason behind it, the heart will not permit it because the great root of human personality seems to feel that it has a relation to the Ultimate Being. Our aspirations, our desires, our activities, all the projects that we are undertaking in this world are a standing refutation of any conclusion to the effect that God is totally transcendent and unrelated to the world.

Here is an enigma. From one side, it looks that there is no connection between God and the world. From another side, it looks that without such relationship, our existence itself would be meaningless. So here we leave the question for the time being.

God and the world and the individual – yourself and myself and everything blessed – constitute the individualities or the contents of the world. What is the relationship between you and the world? This point I have already touched upon at the very outset on the first day itself when I brought you round to the way of thinking which leads us to the conclusion that the universe is an organism, a total whole, and not a house divided against itself. The cosmos is one integrated completeness, and therefore, all its contents including yourself, myself and all things have to be related to it in an integral fashion as limbs of the body or cells of our own organism. Your relationship to the world is organic, not mechanistic. You know the difference between mechanical relation and organic relation, about which also I mentioned some detail. A mechanistic relationship

is the connection of parts to a whole, like the parts of a machine, a bulldozer, an airplane, wherein one part is not having any living connection with another part. A motor of any kind can be regarded as a mechanical structure with many parts involved in it, yet one part has no organic connection with another part; you can remove one part and replace it by another. Organic connection is an inseparable relationship, like the parts operating in a living body. Such is the relation of man to the universe.

From this point of view, it would appear that the world is not outside you. The fact that the world is not outside you will follow from the fact of your integral relationship to the universe. If it is not outside you, where is it then? Does it mean it is inside you? There are some people who say it is inside. It is not so. It is neither inside nor outside. And what it actually is, and where it is, you yourself will be able to understand by a few seconds of contemplation of the fact of your inseparability to its structure. The parts of your own body are neither outside nor inside; they are inseparable and integrally related.

The question of relation is the central point on which every philosophical discussion hangs, finally. The causal relation is the greatest of all relations – one thing causing another or giving rise to another or, for the matter of that, any kind of relation to any other thing. You will find that there is some peculiarity in the concept of relation. It is not so simple as it appears on the surface. Imagine that there are two things, *A* and *B*. You cannot

imagine any sort of relationship between *A* and *B* unless *A* and *B* are two different things. If *A* is the same as *B*, the question of relationship does not arise. It is taken for granted that *A* and *B* are two different things and, therefore, you are trying to see a relationship between them. But if they are totally different, the question of relationship does not arise. You have already concluded there is no connection between *A* and *B*, and yet you are saying there should be a relation, so it is a self-contradictory statement.

We do not know what we are speaking when we say there is a relation between this and that. We make statements without sense. Yet, it has a deeper sense which escapes our notice, in the same way as we found ourselves in a great difficulty in understanding the relationship between God and the world. Yet, this difficulty can be solved by the employment of a proper apparatus of understanding.

The relationship of one thing to another thing, of one individual to another individual, and of all individuals to the world, and the world to God finally – all these relationships are of a similar nature in the sense that everything seems to be hanging on everything else, and one cannot be understood without the other.

How one thing is decided by another, or determined by another, you can know by an analysis you can conduct in regard to your own self. You become aware of the world outside after being sure that you exist first. For instance, when you wake up from sleep, you do not suddenly become aware of things outside, especially

when you are in a very deep sleep. You will not even be able to know where the door is, or the window is. You will be trying to find the exit for the room. In such a state of affairs, you will not be suddenly aware of things outside. There is a total unconsciousness in sleep; and when you wake up, there is a slight and faint feeling that you exist.

When you arise from sleep tomorrow morning, try to analyse this circumstance. You will find that you will know nothing except that you are barely existent. You will not be even able to see your own clothing. Whether the clothes are on or not, you will not know. You will know this after a few moments. You will simply be aware that you are there as something indeterminate and indescribable. After a few minutes, you will know what you are: I am such and such. Then you will become aware of the presence of articles outside, that things exist outside you. There are walls, there is a door, there is a window, and somebody coming in front of you. At first you will not be able to recognise who is coming. Then after a few minutes you will know that it is so-and-so. The awareness of the presence of the world outside is a consequence that follows from the primary assurance of your existence. If I exist, the world also has to exist, because the world is only a name that we give to the atmosphere around us. A spatiotemporal environment around us is what we call the world, and inasmuch as we are here as finite individuals, we are also forced to feel the presence of other individuals located in a similar atmosphere. This is called the world. Now you can

imagine how the presence of the world is connected with you, and you are also related to it in an inseparable manner.

But a third thing introduces itself after some time, which cannot be seen with the eyes. You see only yourself and the world; the third thing cannot be seen, but your reason will tell you a third thing should exist in order that you may be aware that the world is. How do you know that the world exists except by a mechanism of knowledge that operates between you and the world outside?

There is a process of awareness which connects you as an individual with the world which is the object of your awareness. This connecting link between you and the world is something invisible to the eyes, but its existence has to be postulated. Inasmuch as this is a relation that has to be there between every individual and its object, if you carefully think over it, you will realise that this is a universal necessity. This conscious relationship between the seer and the seen, yourself and the world, is a universal need to be accepted as the only factor that can explain how you become aware of the world at all. This universal relation, again, is that which we consider to be the Ultimate Reality of the world, a transcendent Being which is outside the purview of sensory activity and mental operation. It cannot be seen with the eyes for a reason you know very well, because it is the seer and not the seen. That which propels you to see cannot be seen with any organ of sensation, mentation or ratiocination. Yourself, the world and a

transcendent Reality are thus integrally related – God, the world and the individual.

There was a great thinker called Ramanuja, one of the great philosophers of India, who established a great religious system called Vishishtadvaita – we need not worry about the meaning of this word – in which he considers this sort of relation obtaining among God, the world and the individual. The Supreme Being is God Himself, the Absolute, the Ultimate Substance which is the universal relation of all things, like the pervading intelligence in your own body. But you know your intelligence is not the same as the body. There is some sort of a difference. So, he concluded the world is not the same as God, yet it cannot be outside God, even as your body cannot be outside your consciousness. You cannot keep your body somewhere and your consciousness somewhere else. They go together. There is an intimate inseparable relationship between body and soul, your physical organism and your consciousness inside. Similar is the relationship between the world and the Supreme Being, said Ramanuja. The world is not the same as God because it is material in nature, unconscious, changing, transforming, subject to destruction. God is immortal. How can the one be the same as the other? You know very well that your intelligence is immortal, but the body is perishable. This analogy was extended to the ultimate cosmic principles, and Ramanuja concluded that the individuals, the *jivas* – yourself, myself and all others – also are parts of this cosmic body like the cells, as it were, of our body.

According to the doctrine of Ramanuja, God can be compared to the consciousness within us; the world is compared to the body which is inseparably connected to the consciousness within us, yet not identical with it; and our own selves, all things in this world as individuals, are compared to the cells in the body. The cells constitute the body; likewise, the individualities constitute the universe. They are dependent on God – wholly dependent, not identical with God. Here is the sum and substance of a great religious philosophy which Ramanuja propounded.

“But how could you imagine that a material thing could be dependent on consciousness?” said Madhva, for instance. He is another great religious thinker who would not reconcile himself to the truth propounded by Ramanuja that matter is hanging on consciousness, the world is dependent on God, and individuals are somehow or other inseparable from God’s being, though not identical. Madhva would not accept even this much. He thought that we have nothing in us which can compare us with God because we are finite, and God is infinite. We are subject to death; God is immortal. We know nothing practically; God knows everything. How can you say that there is any connection between you and Him? And the materiality of the universe precludes any kind of relationship with the supreme omniscient consciousness of God. So he established a doctrine which concludes that there is a total difference between God, world and the individual, and there is no connection between them. They are all absolutely independent,

having no relationship of one with the other because of the structural differences in their existences.

“But such a total difference is not possible,” said Ramanuja, because you cannot say that something exists outside God. The positing of any existence outside God would limit God Himself. The omnipresence of God precludes the independent existence of other individuals, even the world itself. Hence, the Supreme Being should be one, all-in-all. Though it has to be acceded that the world and the individual are parts of Him, they are not totally different from Him, though we cannot say they are the same as He.

Here we have two great thinkers telling two different things, and these religious philosophies persist even today. Though not in every way, in some respects at least, the dogmas of Christianity have some semblance to the philosophy of Madhva – namely, the doctrine of the Father in heaven, the Son of God, the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the divinity of the sacrament, the possibility of eternal heaven and eternal damnation. Doctrines which are accepted by Christianity are also accepted by Madhva. In every detail they don't agree, but in basic factors of this nature they seem to be in agreement that God is in heaven and the world is evil, from which you have to withdraw yourself by renunciation, and the world is a snare which will tempt you into ungodly activities. No man can serve two masters. You cannot be a servant of the world and also be a servant of God at the same time. God is God, Mammon is Mammon. This is what Christ taught, and any

religious man would teach, holding the doctrine that the world is perishable, a field of temptations, and a bondage in every respect.

Many religious students, even many among us, are in this state mostly. We try to flee from the world as a snare, an object of temptation, a bondage. The world is bondage. That is why people try to get into monasteries, ashramas, temples. And, God is not in this world; therefore, to rise to the supreme heaven of the Absolute, God the Creator, Ishwara, Narayana, the Father in heaven, whoever He is, we have to reject the world with the power of renunciation. This is a religious doctrine which is prevalent not only in Christianity but also in Hinduism, and perhaps in all religions. It follows from this doctrine of the irreconcilability between the transiency, the cussedness, and the tempting character of the material world, and the immortal perfection of God.

So we have taken one step in our study of the philosophy of religion, which will take us further and further. And I request you all to make a note of all these things that I told you because I will be saying these things only once, and next time I will be proceeding further; hence, the request that you carefully attend to the processes of thinking and the arguments that will take you to a great conclusion which, in my opinion, will relieve you of all tensions once and for all, God willing.

Chapter 4

THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION

When we look around in all directions, we see things, objects, plants and trees, animals and men, but we do not see religion anywhere. We are not able to recognise the presence of religion anywhere in the world. We see only people moving about doing something, and the animals, the plants, the things, and all their subdivisions, but not the thing called religion.

We may be under the impression that we see religion in temples, churches and holy places of pilgrimage, but what do we see there other than buildings and people, books and decorated articles? Do we see religion? We see the same things inside the holy of holies that we see in a shop or a railway station. Only the arrangement is different, and the pattern of the presentation of the very same objects may convert them into a shop or a temple. Thus, temples and holy shrines seem to be distinguished from the marketplace in the pattern of the arrangement of things, not because we see something different altogether.

Here is something which is very mysterious. By travelling a long distance, we cannot discover the presence of religion anywhere. We can see human beings running about saying something, and doing a variety of things. This satisfies the curiosity-ridden investigative faculty of man for the time being, but one day he will be tired of this travel. A day comes when man gets fed up

with everything. He has seen nothing, in spite of all his searches. He seems to be caught up in a peculiar enigma which beckons him from one side and tantalises him from another side. This is what we are searching for – a thing which we cannot escape from, and a thing which we can never get. What a pity!

Here is life in its quandary and mystery, enigma and problem and difficulty, where we will not be allowed either to live or to die. We have no freedom to keep quiet, nor have we the confidence that we are going to obtain what we seek in this world. Hence, life has ended in a struggle without an achievement.

People are very fond of saying that life is an adventure, but the adventure is always directed to an achievement of a purpose. If the purpose is always receding from the ken of our searching faculty like the horizon moving further and further, never getting caught by the grip of our hand – if the adventure of life is only an adventure and nothing more than that, and we are going to gain nothing out of it – this is what is called catching a will-o'-the-wisp. And when old age supervenes, when life fades like the evening flower, we seem to be disillusioned of all things. Religion has not come, and we know nothing about all these things. How is it that we are in this predicament?

Though we seem to be overwhelmed sometimes, and overcome by an enthusiasm of a religious type – and there is not one man in this world who would not have been urged onward by an instinct of religion in some

form or other, at some time or the other in life – but yet, nothing can be seen with the eyes.

The seriousness of this problem diminishes, and we seem to be able to discover a ray of hope when we see another phenomenon of this type in our own personal lives. The recognition of our own existence is not an object of perception. As we cannot see religion anywhere, we cannot see our own selves also. You may say that you are seeing yourself seated here. We have already noted on an earlier occasion that this thing that we see seated here perhaps is not the true me, I or you, reasons for which are well known to you already.

You may close your eyes, plug your ears, block all your senses, yet you will know that you are. That means to say that there is a kind of knowledge which does not require the apparatus of senses, one example of which is the knowledge of your own being. Everything else in this world requires the operation of the senses. If the sense organs do not work, you cannot know anything that is happening anywhere. But there is one thing which you can know, even without the operation of the senses – the fact that you are. You know that you are, even if you are blind and deaf and cannot speak; yet, you know that you are. This is a strange thing, a capacity which overcomes all dependence on the faculties of perception so very essential to things in the world.

It is possible that religion is of this kind. It may perhaps belong to a category to which we also belong. We do not seem to belong to the objects of the world, but today we have converted ourselves into objects. This is

the reason why we cannot see religion with the eyes. We see only objects. The reason is that we are also objects. Man has lost his subjectivity; and in a world of mechanistic associations, he has become one nut and bolt in the machine of life, and he has finally landed himself in the predicament of a factory worker so that everything he does in life may be regarded as a sort of mechanical action in a large factory of life.

And what do we see in a factory? Only objects. Even the worker in a factory is seen as an object; he has no subjectivity, he is such a dependent individual. He is one of the parts of the huge machine called the factory, without which the factory cannot run. Have we also transformed ourselves into the parts of this machine which we call this world of science, physics, astronomy and all human activity?

When the knowing subject has been absorbed in the world of objects, a state into which we have landed ourselves apparently, we can neither see religion nor any other value in this world. There are things we value very much, like goodness, honesty, truthfulness, religiosity. We value these things high above every other advantageous thing in this world, yet these are the things we cannot see with the eyes. We cannot see goodness anywhere. We cannot see truthfulness. They are not objects of sense. We are hugging principles which are not capable of being discovered by the well-known faculties of man, the sense organs. Finally, we find that all the values of life seem to be super-sensory, and the

mechanism of the senses proves itself to be inadequate in the search of these super-sensory values.

The presence of a superior to one's own self is the initial fact of the operation of the phenomenon called religion. The very meaning of religion connotes the recognition of a superior to yourself in some way or the other. If everything in the world is like you, the religion that you think of loses its sense. The awareness that there is something different from you and perhaps superior to you in some way compels you to establish a relation of obeisance, reverence, awe, respect, affection, and all the things of this sort between yourself and that object.

It is not always necessary that this object of reverence should be visible to the eyes. We are frightened many a time without knowing why we are frightened. Even the unlettered man feels there is something which defies him, and which will not listen to his dictates or mandates.

Students of religion have gone deep into these stages of the development of the religious consciousness in human life, and after meticulous examination of this phenomenon, have come to the conclusion that we cannot see religion in this world unless we feel that there is something in the world which is superior to us.

Now, today, we are living in a world of equality of social forces, and forces of every kind. There is nothing superior to us. The boss and the subordinate are on a single pedestal. The ruler and the ruled are similar in every character. Nothing is inferior, nothing is superior. Why should we want religion in this world when there is

an equanimous distribution of physical forces and economic powers? Whatever I am, you are, and whatever you are, I am. Who is superior and who is inferior? Who can be obedient to another? Obedience has no sense in a world of total equality where everything moves along a beaten track of common purpose; and this common purpose is nothing but the objectness of the human being. We have all become objects, and therefore, no object can be regarded as subservient to another object. The externality that characterises things in the world infects the human being also, so that we are also externalised persons. Do we not see one another as scattered here in a heap of people seated in this hall, for instance?

Inasmuch as we are externalised units of perceptual centres, we have no subjectivity in us. You see me and I see you. Then who is the subject and who is the object here? Inasmuch as everyone is seen by everyone else, everyone can be regarded as an object. Thus, the world is full of objects. This is an objective world, and in this objective world where only objects exist, subjects have no place.

Then we have what we call the mechanistic religion of materialism. It is a doctrine of the involvement of everything in material forces, so that there cannot be anyone who can observe these forces. Even the so-called observer of the forces is a part and parcel of this quantum of material forces. The blind movement of matter is the object as well as the subject in a world of pure matter. It

is difficult to understand how matter can see itself. Here is a point which requires consideration.

But the stuff of mankind is such that it cannot always be beguiled by these doctrines because there is dissatisfaction, a character which cannot be attributed to matter. It is man that is dissatisfied, and more dissatisfied than any other object in this world. Nothing can please him finally, and he is in search of an objective which he does not seem to be able to discover in this world of pure objects. He cannot understand why it should be raining, why the sun should rise, or why the seasons should roll on in such a precise, scientific manner.

There are laws operating in this world over which man has no control. The feeling that there are things over which one can have no control frightens us. We are in a world where there are things which we cannot understand, which we cannot rule, which we cannot command, and yet without which we cannot exist. We cannot command the winds and the waters and the elements. We have nothing to say about them. They are totally independent of us. Yet without their existence, our existence would be obliterated in a second. This shows to what extent man is dependent on the forces of the world.

The desire to investigate into the nature or the specific character of this dependence on forces over which one can have no control is the beginning of religion. Investigate into this phenomena: "How is it that I have become so much dependent on the world? How is it that I cannot know anything, finally?"

People who are totally absorbed in the objectivity of the world have no religion. They are sleeping, like matter. The lowest condition of man, who is designated by varieties of names by anthropologists – the primitive man, the Neanderthal man, or whatever man he may be called – seems to be sunk in the material objectivity of things so deeply that an awareness of a superior force controlling him may not arise in the earlier stages.

Religion proper, in a pronounced manner, manifests itself only when we begin to feel the presence of a pervasive principle which seems to be operating behind the particularities of the world, of which we are also unfortunately a part, though this pervasive principle cannot be seen with the eyes. An abstract universal seems to be controlling the concrete particulars, without an acceptance of which life seems to be unintelligible.

An inference that particulars in the world cannot come together in any systematised manner or in an intelligible way without the operation of an abstract force behind them would lead us to a deeply philosophical mood. Any organised effort or movement is unthinkable, unless there is a force of organisation behind the particulars which are to be organised. Any association, organisation, society or group will be an unintelligible nonsense, if behind this association so-called there is not to be a pervasive force.

This is again an invisible object. We cannot see a thing called government. We see only people sitting together in a large hall and calling themselves members of Parliament. We see only chairs and tables and people,

not the parliament. So the thing called parliament is a pervasive influence that operates behind these particulars called human beings seated on the chairs in the parliament house. We cannot see an organisation; we see only people calling themselves an organisation. What is called an organisation is again a pervasive force, an influence that seems to be seeping through the particularities called the individuals.

So is the case with any kind of association, even between two parts, two individuals, two persons. Two people are friends; one is a friend of the other. Friendship is invisible to the eyes. We see only two people. Friendship is again a permeating force operating between two parts and bringing them together into a cohesive completeness. This seems to be the feature of everything in this world. The scattered particulars, whether they are material or organic, cannot convey any meaning to us unless they are organised in some fashion. For every project or enterprise, we embark upon an organisation of some sort, by which we mean to say that we introduce a super-physical influence into the visible physical units – call them objects or human beings.

This awareness wakes us up into a new vision of things that the values of life are not physical objects. That which you regard as really dear and meaningful is not a thing that you can see with your eyes, and the things that you can see with your eyes are the least important things in the world. Yet, we may be muddled in our thinking and go after the objects which are physical, and cling to them, imagining that these are the values.

On a careful analysis, you will realise that the values that control life are not visible to the eyes. They are totally beyond the ken of sense operation. Be a little investigative and go deep into the structure of every phenomenon in this world. You will find that the thing that you love most is that which you cannot see with the eyes.

I mentioned to you the phenomenon of friendship between two persons. *A* loves *B* as a friend, and clings to *B* as an object of endearment. The object is imagined to be the embodiment of affection. The object is itself affection concretised in that particular form. But we know how unimaginative a person should be to think that the affection that one evinces in regard to a person is the same as the person.

We have already had occasion to observe that every association is an invisible pervasive influence, and friendship is one such. It is an influence that is exerted mutually between two individuals, and the individuals themselves are not the influence. This is a transcendent operative force which we love so much as friendship. But occasions there are when friends can part relationship; one can bid goodbye to the other under given conditions. What happened to that affection which was poured upon the individual earlier, recognising the individual itself as a form, as it were, of affection? Friendship has ceased to operate under conditions which cannot permit the operation of this affection. Therefore, affection is a condition, and not an object. It is a state of affairs, and not a thing that we see with the eyes. It is not a human

being that we love as a friend, but something in our head which has somehow withdrawn itself to its own source due to unfavourable circumstances.

We are not discussing friendship here. I am only giving this as an example to show that finally, when we go deeply into the philosophical stuff of what we call religion, people realise that it is a phenomenon which cements all particulars into a cohesive whole of superior transcendence in a universal pervasive manner, and religion is not a thing that we can see in the temples and churches. We can see only the minds of people.

Religion is a longing, and not a thing that is seen. If the longing is absent, the things may be there as they were, and they cease to be religious any more. You may be sitting inside a church for years together without the spark of longing. You would be only a watchman of the building, but not a religious person. You may be a caretaker of that structure, but you cannot regard yourself as a seeker. A seeker, a religious individual is, therefore, one who longs for that pervasive invisible influence, without which particulars lose their collocation, arrangement and meaning.

Thus, we may be led to a very strange conclusion again that religion is a transcendent force and not an empirical phenomenon. It is transcendent because it cannot be seen within the jurisdiction of the objects of sense. We have searched all over the world and have found nothing of religion, but we found that it is present, as a government is present, though it is not visible to the eyes. We see a Collector, a Minister, a President, but they

are not the government. The government is something incapable of ordinary definition. We cannot search for it. It is inside the hall, also. The thing called government is present inside this building, but we cannot see it. We cannot see it anywhere. Go anywhere throughout the country, and you will find that it is not anywhere, yet it is everywhere.

The principle of religion is nowhere to be seen with the eyes, yet it is everywhere present as the meaning that is hidden behind the relationship between particulars. Thus, religion is a meaning and not a substance. It is not a thing that we can catch hold of with our hands. It is a significance, a value, a connotation, and a super-sensible mystery. Inasmuch as religion eludes the grasp of the senses and defies any kind of experiment and observation in a scientific manner, it may appear that religion does not exist in this world, and we may be prone to deny even the very existence of it.

Anything that is invisible is an object of suspicion, but, as I mentioned, there are things which may not be objects of experiment and observation. You cannot conduct an experiment and observation of your own true being, notwithstanding the fact that you are sure that it exists. So a particular form of existence may be permissible under the scheme of things, though it cannot be an object of science, or even perhaps of a philosophical analysis. Religion is not philosophy. It is not an intellectual activity, or a ratiocination of the academician. It is a feeling of a stuff that is at the root of your being. And if you can recollect the analysis in regard

to the root of this being we conducted earlier, you would know what this root of yours is.

So we may safely conclude from these analyses that in the aspiration for religion, the whole of our being is caught up. The root of our personality is welling up into action for grasping the whole that is present in the midst of all the particulars. The deepest that is within us is asking for the deepest in the universe. The whole of us is asking for the whole of the cosmos, and when the entirety of us rouses itself into action, we become a truly religious individual. The whole of us never acts and, therefore, we are never wholly religious at any time. We are fragmented in our observations; we are partially religious, but never entirely, wholly, because the total spirit in us never rises into action. We are active emotionally at some times and intellectually at other times, and physically sometimes, but the deepest within us never comes to the surface.

It is said that the deepest stuff in man operates on rare occasions, but not always, just as a reserve force in the army or the police does not come into the forefront at every moment of time, unless it is required. Usually it is not necessary, and therefore, it does not come to the forefront.

The essential force of our personality does not rise into conscious action because its action is not necessary under the existing circumstances. We can get on without it. Our will operates, our intellect operates, our feeling operates, but none of these is wholly us. These are like servants whom we employ for particular purposes, and a

servant is not the same as the master. There is a master principle within us which does not act unless it is evoked into action by supernormal circumstances operating in the world. Normal circumstances cannot rouse us into action.

Students of biology and psychology have felt that rarely our whole personality acts, such as when we are drowning in water, for instance. I don't know if any one of you has had this experience of drowning. Then everything seems to be hopeless, and it is impossible even to think. Your true being rises into action and your best power is harnessed for activity at that time. The greatest in you begins to act when you are drowning in water. At other times, why should you act? Things are well. You know very well that everything is failing there. Nobody is going to help you. Then the final reserve force that is within you comes into action. The entire army is unleashed because a tremendous enemy is attacking, and nobody else is ready to help you. And who is the greatest power that is within you? The reserve force, the deepest within you, comes into action.

When you are fast asleep, you seem to be going to the same condition. There are certain emotions of a romantic type or an aesthetic nature very rarely manifesting themselves in life where your whole being is roused into action, such as when you listen to superb music – not ordinary music but superb music, enrapturing and throwing you out of gear totally. Such music is very rare, but it does exist. There are types of music that can throw you out of track totally, and you are

no more yourself. At that time you lose personality consciousness, and your soul acts.

You may be thrown out of gear in this aesthetic fashion even when you look at a beautiful painting of Michelangelo or Ravi Varma, or of that category. You will not be able to draw your eyes from this painting. You are absorbed. You with a capital 'Y' get absorbed into this phenomenon called the painting. It may be a form of architecture, it may be a sculpture, it may be a superb form of literature or a great poetry where you get drowned and forget yourself totally. In this condition, your true being acts. But it does not act, ordinarily. When you are roused into a fit of tremendous anger, perhaps sometimes you go mad; in this madness, also your whole being acts – though in a negative manner, not in a positive way.

Religion is a positive manifestation of the totality of your being in a conscious manner, not unconsciously as in sleep, not partially as it does in any ordinary activity. Therefore, religion is a very rare thing in this world. Everybody cannot be religious. Everybody cannot be so because of the difficulty in comprehending what it is and deploying it for the purposes of daily activities. We are just nobodies like machines, tools, moving in the street. When we go to purchase vegetables in the shop, what religion is there in our mind? It has vanished *in toto* because the recognition of the presence of this peculiar force connecting particulars is absent when we reduce ourselves to purchasers of vegetables and travellers in a bus holding a ticket in our hand. We are only just objects

seated in a railway train, not religious individuals. Our religion goes to the winds at one stroke because of the visibility of an object which enthrals our objectivity wholly. Our objective personality takes possession of us to such an extent that the true subjectivity is no more there.

So, to be truly religious in the right sense of the term, one has to exercise great caution, and perhaps it requires great training. An untrained mind cannot be religious. Reading a scripture or listening to a sermon need not be equated with religion. There are many in this world who do this. We can go on listening to sermons and reading scriptures, yet we may not be religious people because of the phenomenon of objectivity which has caught hold of us, into which we land ourselves and through which we manifest our personality in ordinary activity like boors, like animals, not even as human beings, what to talk of the divine call which religion is.

Thus, when we go into the foundational nature of religion, we discover that it is a magnificent something which can enthrall us wholly and make us forget ourselves entirely, if only we can know what it is. And to come to know what it is and to employ it in our day-to-day existence is the practice of religion.

Chapter 5

BECOMING FIT FOR MOKSHA

We noted yesterday that the religious spirit has an element of transcendence, inasmuch as it cannot be discovered in the objects of the world. Here is a very important point which should draw anyone's attention. This feature of the religious ideal as a necessary transcendence, rather than an immediate presence, has given a novel touch to the religions of the world.

All that people do in the name of religion can be explained by this very important feature of the transcendence of the religious ideal. People take to asceticism; they leave homestead and chattel and all property. Every connection is severed, and the severest attempt is made to withdraw oneself from every visible phenomenon of the world. Religion has become synonymous with renunciation. It cannot but be that, because we have said the religious ideal is not in this world; therefore, renunciation is called for. Why is it called for? Because the things which attract us here are the things which cannot help us in the pursuit of the religious ideal.

This has a serious impact upon human life, and all the religions that are prevalent today have one uniform characteristic, namely, the abandonment of every type of contact with things in the world and an idealistic occupation with the religious goal, as proclaimed both by

the reasoning of one's own mind and the declaration of the scriptures of the religions.

There is this call for renunciation in some measure in the teachings of the ancient masters, the prophets and the writings available in the scriptures. But the nature of the human mind is such that it can pay attention only to one thing at a time, and not to more than one thing. While it is true that the religious ideal cannot be found in this world because of its universality, pervasiveness and, therefore, transcendence, it is not wholly true that it is not in this world. Here again is a great question before us which puts a check on our excessive enthusiasm in respect of what religions call the renunciate spirit or the ascetic ideal.

Think for yourself for a few minutes. If a thing is totally transcendent, beyond your reach, how could you ever reach it? The very acceptance of the transcendence of a particular being implies a total isolation of it from your present way of living. But who is it that is aspiring for the religious ideal? It is you, it is me, it is these people in the world who have been segregated by the logic of the religious pursuits as totally irreconcilable with the true nature of religion.

There is a double aspect of religion: transcendence and immanence. Inasmuch as it is an all-pervasive, invisible, permeating presence, and inasmuch as such a thing can never be seen in this world, it goes without saying that it is a transcendence. But there is the other side of it, which cannot be ignored. If it is wholly a transcendence, no one can realise it. Not only that, you

cannot be even aware that it is transcendent. Your consciousness of the transcendence of the religious ideal presupposes a connection between your consciousness and this transcendence, so it is not literally transcendent as it may appear to the arid logic of the human intellect. This is, again, very important to note. If it had been only transcendent and nothing else – God has been a Creator above the world, never to be found in this world – you could not even know this fact because knowledge is a correspondence between seer and seen, knower and known, subject and object. The knowledge of the fact of the transcendence of an ideal implies the knowledge process operating between the subjective knower of this fact and the object which is this supposed transcendence.

Hence, in your knowledge of the fact of the transcendence of the religious ideal, it acts as an object of your knowledge because you know it. Anything that is a content of your knowledge can be regarded as an object of that knowledge. God is transcendent Creator above the seven heavens, and the goal of religion is beyond the ken of this world. This knowledge is there; we have come to this conclusion. But this knowledge then is a content of your subjective awareness; it is an object, and there cannot be a knowledge of the object, or anything for the matter of that, unless there is a knowledge process connecting the knower with the known. Hence, this so-called transcendent ideal is connected with you in some way even here on this material Earth. So we have to be a little cautious in being overenthusiastic in our religious calls in the name of renunciation.

You have seen ascetics barely wearing clothing, eating almost nothing, not sleeping, not speaking, having no physical contact with any human being, and living in deserts and forests and caves because the religious ideal is not here, it is in the heavens. While it is true that it is in the heavens, and nothing in this world can help us in this great pursuit – granted this is a fact, any amount of contact with the things of this world, organic or inorganic, will not help us in the realisation of the religious ideal – but this is not the whole truth. There is some hidden significance which we have missed in our analysis of this theme.

We are living in this world. We have a physical body, a mind, social relations, and all the concomitants of this apparatus of the psychophysical and psychosocial personality are with us. It is in this circumstance of an involvement in the body-mind complex that we are aspiring to be religious and to reach God as the final goal of our life. So here marks a halt to the ebullition of enthusiasm which would reject everything that is Earth and world, and hold on to a future ideal of the salvation of the spirit.

Together with the concept of the transcendence of the religious ideal, we have also a simultaneous notion that it is a future ideal, to be realised in the future – after some days, months and years. This is another peculiarity of our way of thinking. It is not in this world. It is transcendent; therefore, it is a future ideal. We cannot have it today. We have to work hard and put forth great effort.

Anything that is only in the future, but not in the present or the past, is segregated in the time process, and it becomes temporal. The eternity of its character is abolished by the futurity of its nature. That which is only in the future, that which is only in the present or only in the past, and not at all times, is what is called non-eternal, perishable. Then this great goal of religion would be a perishable ideal because of its being only in the future, and we cannot have it now, nor was it in the past. Thus, there is another mistake in our thinking. It is not wholly a future ideal. It appears to be in the future because of our involvement in the transitions and successions of events we call the time process. We cannot think eternity except in terms of the time process, and we cannot think of God except as a transcendent Creator. These are limitations of the human mind.

But it does not, and need not, necessarily follow that the fact is this. While one aspect of our thinking suggests the transcendence and the futurity of the ideal, another aspect will tell us that a future thing will be non-eternal, and a transcendent thing cannot be obtained. Hence, it is not in the future, and also it is not transcendent entirely. It has a connection with the present, and it was in the past, ushering us onwards.

The most important aspect here in this consideration is our relationship to the great ideal we are pursuing, call it the religious or the spiritual ideal. The study of scriptures and texts which glorify and magnify the creative aspect of the Supreme Being are likely to sweep us off our feet, and we may ignore the immediate needs

of the circumstance in which we are placed. We are moving onward, no doubt, to the realisation of the spiritual ideal, but we are taking a step from the present moment, and we are not always in the future. We are not already there.

Inasmuch as the future has not been contacted, and we are in the present in this condition of human society and body-mind relations, together with the ideal of salvation which is moksha, as it is called in Sanskrit, we have also to take into consideration the appurtenances that are necessary to enable us to pursue this ideal. We may have to reach a destination some thousand kilometres away, and if we are thinking only of this destination and not the ways and means of reaching it, our conception would be too idealistic, minus all realistic elements.

Hence, the idea of moksha or the liberation of the soul, which is often identified with the religious or the spiritual ideal of all religions, yogas, etc., is related in a very inextricable manner with the immediate realities of life. Therefore, religion is in this world and it has to be in our own rooms, in this very hall, in this very body and mind, and it cannot be outside. If it is wholly outside, we are not intended for it. We have needs which are of a different nature from the aspiration for moksha. Can anyone say that it is only moksha that one wants, and nothing else? We have hunger, thirst, fatigue, illness, and there are countless relationships in this world with people outside and things in general.

The ascent of consciousness to the realisation of this ideal is a gradual disentanglement of consciousness from its involvements in its own lower stages. Every step in the direction of perfection is a positive growth of the spirit, as it were, an untying of various knots which have tethered us down to this Earth experience. If there are a hundred knots which tie us to this Earth, every knot has to be opened carefully. We cannot imagine that there is only one knot – hence, the great length of time that we may sometimes take in even understanding what we are supposed to do in this world.

Recall to your memory the great verse of the Bhagavadgita: Among the people in this world, one among a million may aspire for this ideal, and even among those who are really aspiring, one may succeed. All do not succeed, even as everyone who appears for an examination need not necessarily pass, though they have struggled hard.

The difficulty here is the ambivalent attitude of our mind which sinks between the Earth and the heavens, and takes excessive measures either of attachment to this world or complete detachment from the world. Now, religion is not an extreme attitude of consciousness. It is a balancing of it. We cannot either hate the world or love the world. We are not permitted to do either. We cannot say this is the den of Satan and go to the Sahara desert for finding God in the caves. This is not so. This is not a fact.

It is also not a fact that we can have this universal perfection in the limited particular objects in this world. You know how you are caught from both sides. This is

what is called Morton's Fork. It appears there was a Prime Minister of England, Morton, who was the Minister of King Henry VII. He was a very shrewd man. I am just telling you what is this Morton's Fork: catching both sides. He was bent upon taxing people, collecting large taxes, and if he saw rich people, well dressed and living in a gaudy way, he would say, "You are well-to-do persons, so you have to pay tax. You have enough with you."

But if he saw a poor wretched man with tattered clothes, he would say, "You are hiding your wealth. I know; I understand. You are putting on this appearance so that you may try to avoid tax. So pay tax." So if you were rich you had to pay, and even if you were poor you had to pay because he said poverty is only an appearance. You are rich; you are avoiding tax by looking poor. And a rich man, of course, has to pay. So either way, you have to pay.

Similar is this peculiar religion before us. It catches us either way. It will not allow us to live in this world, and it will not permit us to abandon this world. This is also the difficulty in understanding the gospel of the Bhagavadgita. It is not so easy to understand what it says. It appears that sometimes it is emphasising certain aspects pertaining to this world, and at other times it looks as if it has no connection with this world and it is talking some great unreachable ideal of a transcendent nature.

The difficulty of Arjuna as portrayed in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgita is everyone's difficulty – my

difficulty, your difficulty, every seeker's difficulty. It is an attitude of going to extremes. Go ahead, embark upon a battle, pursue everything in this world, and struggle to gain as much treasure from this world as possible. This is one extreme. The other extreme is, we want nothing from this world. Everything is transitory, transient, unreligious, unspiritual, ungodly, satanic, devilish, and so we hibernate into a mental condition of total dissociation of every kind of reality.

Now, when I use the word 'reality', again I have to tell you what actually we mean by this word. There are several definitions. That which is real is, in an ultra-logical manner, sometimes defined as that which persists in three periods of time: past, present and future. There is no such thing in this world; therefore, reality is not in this world, may be one conclusion. Satyatvaṁ bādharāhityaṁ (Panchadasi 3.29) says Vidyananya in his great work Panchadasi: Non-contradiction is the test of reality. It should not be transcended, contradicted, negated by any other thing or experience. And what is there in this world which cannot be contradicted, negated or transcended? Everything is subject to this difficulty, so there is nothing ultimately real in this world. This is the definition of the ultimately real called *paramarthika-satta* in Sanskrit.

But there is another degree of reality called *vyavaharika-satta*. It is empirical reality. The reality of the workaday world – the reality, for instance, that you are sitting here and I am speaking – cannot be called an ultimate reality, but it has some reality, and what sort of

reality it is will be known to you, each for one's own self. It is tentatively real as far as this particular framework of space and time continues; consequently, as long as we continue in this condition, this teaching of mine is valid. But if the whole space-time structure is to change and, therefore, our bodily and psychical structure also is to change simultaneously, then the entire circumstance changes, as it happens, for instance, when we wake up from dream.

Dream is a reality. We cannot call it unreal, because we have an experience. Every experience is real at the time of its being experienced; but we cannot call a dream ultimately real because it is contradicted by waking, and we have already said anything that is subject to contradiction cannot be called reality. Dream is transcended, contradicted and negated by the waking condition, and therefore, we say that dream is not real. But when we are actually in that state, it is negated waking, and we were passing through the vicissitudes of pains and pleasures even in dream as individuals of a particular type. You know very well how happy and how grieved you were in dream also. How could that be regarded as unreal?

The daily occurrences and the contacts in this empirical world come under what are called empirical reality, *vyavaharika-satta*; they have pragmatic value. It has a workable value, but not an ultimate value. Compared to the empirical reality or value of the waking world, dream is called *pratibhasika-satta*. These are all Sanskrit terms which you need not remember.

Pratibhasika is apparent reality, dream. *Vyavaharika* is empirical reality, waking. And the Supreme Being is *paramarthika*, Absolute Reality. Now we are not in the state of the Absolute. This is well known to every one of us. We are in the states of *pratibhasika* and *vyavaharika*, or to clinch the whole matter, we may forget the dream occurrence and say we are in a practical world of pragmatic relationships.

Now, the pursuit of the religious ideal, or the ascent to God, is a gradual lifting of your feet from the condition in which you are now. It is like passing from one class to another class in an educational institution, or as when you grow from childhood to adulthood, you get out of one condition and enter into another. When you have a test or an examination in a particular class in a school, you pass out of it and go to the next. When you go to the next higher state of study, the higher class, the lower one is not rejected. It has not been isolated, cut off, as unreal. It was real, and it is real even now when you are in a higher stage. The only thing is, you have overcome its limitations. You have transcended it, not rejected it.

Hence, we may bring to our memories again the renunciation that religious teachers expect us to embark upon. Asceticism, which is the characteristic of religion, is not a rejection of the world; it is a transcendence of the world. You have seen through and through the whole world and have no need for the world now, just as when you wake up from dream you have no need for the treasures of dream; but when you were in the dream, it

was necessary. A dream sickness may require a dream medicine, and so on, so you cannot say it is unreal wholly. But now you have come to another degree of reality. Thus, the rise of the spirit in its movement towards the supreme perfection is an ascent from one degree to another degree of reality.

So renunciation, asceticism, *vairagya*, *sannyasa*, monasticism, or whatever be the name by which you call this attitude, mean certain insignia of your overcoming your dependence on things, and not being dependent and saying they are not real. That would be the ostrich attitude. An ascetic is not an ostrich who buries his head in the sand and says there is nothing outside him. You see the world outside. How do you say it is not there? But if you cannot see it, that is a different matter. You have really perfected yourself in renunciation. You have really renounced all the wealth of dream now because you have no concern with it, you are no more in need of it, it has no meaning for you; you have transcended it, and have come to a higher level of experience. Renunciation becomes complete only when you have overcome the world, and not rejected the world; otherwise, like a crocodile it will catch you one day or the other. Any desire that is unfulfilled is a dangerous weapon inside us which we are keeping secretly, as if it is not there. All our desires are the knots with which we are tied to this world.

Hence, the ancient masters, the teachers of yoga in India especially, conceived of a fourfold attitude called *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha*. You cannot say only *moksha*, and nothing else. This is an extreme attitude of

yours, extreme because you have forgotten you are in the *vyavaharika-satta*, or the empirical world, and the world is there before your eyes. You cannot say you are not seeing it. When you don't see it, then the questions do not arise, just as when you do not see a dream you have to say nothing about it. Nobody goes on discussing about the dream world. It is just gone, finished, and we are in a different degree or level of reality.

But we are very much concerned with the world. We don't just treat it as a dream. We are involved in it wholly, totally; therefore, because of the fact of our involvement in the network of the entire phenomena called the world, a rise into the next step in religion or spirituality would be not an individualised isolation of our body-mind complex from the network of the whole world, but a rising of the total situation itself. It is as if the whole world is rising when you are rising, because when you wake up from dream, the whole dream phenomena also has gone. It is not only one individual that has gone up into the waking condition and the dream friends are still there. Just imagine how interesting it is. You saw many people in dream. You saw mountains and rivers, and you had relationships with many things, and then you woke up. When you woke up, they also have woken up. There is no friend there in dream. You cannot say you have left them there in the dream and have come now alone to the waking world. Everything has come up totally, en masse.

This is the kind of thing that will happen when you rise to the next step in spirit. It is not only some

individual slowly sitting in a corner and wrenching oneself from the world and going to godly regions. That is not possible, just as you cannot leave your friends in the dream world and come alone to the waking world. The friends also have to come. All things there get transmuted into a new value altogether in waking. Such a miracle takes place when you ascend to the higher nature of spirit – namely, the whole world comes with you. It has to come because you are not outside the world, nor the world is outside you. We have noted this in the earlier days. The world is not outside you. If it is not outside you, how can you leave it here and go to God? That is not possible.

There can sometimes be a great error in our renunciation spirit. We leave our homes and come to an ashram and think that we are renunciates. It is a great mistake, because the whole world will come with you wherever you go. You are inextricably connected with it, organically related to it, and the whole world has to come with you, even when you go to God. This is a mystery and a miracle. Man's mind cannot easily understand what all this means. As you go higher and higher, you will find there are greater and greater mysteries to encounter. It is not a mathematical equation or a straight driving of the car on a beaten track; it is a zigzag path, and a very difficult thing to grasp.

The point is that the concept of moksha is involved in other associations of ours, which go by the name of dharma, *artha* and *kama*. I hope you know all these terms, and I need not dilate upon them very much.

Anyhow, I will briefly mention what they mean and what their relation is to the moksha ideal or the ideal of the liberation of the soul.

We are not merely a soul. We are also a mind and a body. Can we keep the soul aside and the body somewhere, and the mind in a third place? It is not possible. So inasmuch as moksha is the freedom of the soul, we may think that we are concerned only with the soul and not with the mind, not with the body, not with its relations either. This is a mistake because at present we are a complex, and not merely pure spirit. We are involved spirit now, and not pure, unadulterated spirit. Hence, the ideal of pure unadulterated spirituality is inapplicable to an involved individual who is in body, who is in mind, who is in a family, who is in the world and involved in many things.

So we should call a spade a spade, as they say. You should know what your situation is in this world, and should not overestimate yourself as a great yogi. This is a great mistake. Nobody is a great yogi. It is very difficult to achieve that state. One has to be very humble here. It is better that you are humble and know where you stand, rather than imagine that you are on a high pedestal.

The relationship of the soul with the mind and body brings into relief the need for our involvement in what is called dharma, *artha*, *kama*. While moksha is the ideal of the spirit, there are ideals connected with the body and mind and its relationship outside. As I mentioned a few minutes before, we have to gradually withdraw ourselves from our associations, and renunciation is only that.

There is a simultaneous action taking place when we rise into a higher level. The lower is overcome. *Vairagya* and *abhyasa* go together. Renunciation and practice are simultaneous activities. The moment we sit for the practice of a higher ideal, we are automatically withdrawn from the lower; therefore, *vairagya* goes with *abhyasa*, and *abhyasa* goes with *vairagya*.

Hence, in the pursuit of the moksha ideal we do not take only the soul, leaving the mind and the body here. The whole complex has to get transmuted. When you are thirsty you drink water, you don't munch *chappatis*; when you are hungry you eat solid food and are not satisfied merely with liquids; when you are tired you want to lie down on the bed; and when you are ill you require medication. As different conditions of your personality call for different types of attention, the different layers of our individuality call for these outlooks known as *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, moksha. So we are not only in a state of moksha, and it is not possible to pursue this ideal ignoring the bodily, the social, the psychological levels. We have physical needs, mental needs, intellectual needs, emotional needs and social needs.

This is why the great teachers have cautioned us that no need can be turned a deaf ear to. As it is often said, you cannot ask a creditor to go away. Nobody can tell a creditor that. He will not listen to what you say – “Get away! Get away, I have nothing to do with you.” Why should you not? He will say, “No, I have got something to do with you.” So you may say you have nothing to do

with the world, but the world will say, “My dear friend, I have something to do with you. I am not going to leave you like that so easily.”

We should not be enemies of the world in our religious enthusiasms, nor should we cling to the world as a mother clings to the child. We should adopt a judicious attitude, as a judge in a court has a balanced attitude towards the two contending parties. He does not belong either to this party or that party; otherwise, there will be no judgment if a judge associates with a client.

Hence, *samatvaṁ yoga ucyate* (Gita 2.48), says the Bhagavadgita. Harmony is yoga, not excess, not extreme. *Nātyaśnatas tu yogosti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ, na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna; yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu, yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhaḥā* (Gita 6.16-17). It says that you should be very harmonious, equilibrated and sensible in your work, in your rest, in your pursuits which are empirical and religious. In everything there should be a golden mean, a *via media*.

We are not wholly in God, as you know very well, and we are not wholly in the world also because one part of us pulls us above. That is why you have come here to listen to people speaking. But the other part pulls you back to the world, so you are midway between the world and God. Certain characteristics of the world are in us and certain characteristics of the spirit also may be in us. Due to the characteristics of the spirit in us we are praying, contemplating and looking up for that blessed day when God will embrace us. But as the world is also

there calling us, we are hungry and thirsty and feeling wretched in many ways.

Thus exercising great wisdom, we have to strike a balance between the calls of life which are of the here and the hereafter; and, as I mentioned, you may already be aware of what this dharma, *artha*, *kama*, moksha means. *Artha* is the material ideal. All material needs come under *artha*. You cannot say that you have no material needs. You have, so you have to strike a balance with them also. *Kama* is the vital need, emotional desires, aesthetic, romantic desires. And dharma is the compulsive law that operates in such a way that you cannot come in conflict with anybody in the world. Not only in the world, in all the seven planes of existence you have to be set in harmony. The law of harmonious relationship of all individuals in all the planes of existence, including this physical one, is dharma. When these calls are listened to properly, when the debts that we owe to this world are paid fully and nothing is left out, we may become fit for moksha.

Chapter 6

THE CHANTING OF VEDA MANTRAS AND THE FIRST MANTRA OF THE PURUSHA SUKTA

For the first time in the history of the world the great vision of religion was proclaimed in the Purusha Sukta of the Veda, which can be regarded as the most magnificent vision bequeathed to us by the ancient masters. To the seers of the Veda, religion was life. The way they conducted themselves was their religion. What they spoke was their religion, and the vision that they had about things in the world was their religion. Religion was not a textbook; it was not a scripture. It was not a study, or something heard from other people. It was something that was seen directly. This seeing is called the Veda. It is called Darshana, the vision integral, not the vision of the eyes or the ears or the sense organs. It is not perception, but infusion. It is *sakshatkara* or realisation, an immediate contact with the quintessential essence of things – not a mediate contact as we have with the senses in respect of the objects of the world.

Thus, in the vision which is the Purusha Sukta we have a masterly stroke, unparalleled in religious history, where man ceases to be man in his envisionment of the Cosmic Man, whom he designates in the language of these mantras as the Purusha Supreme. Those of you who might have heard of this great hymn of the Veda will know what it actually connotes. It is a short prayer, or we may say it is an exclamation, a psalm, an ecstatic

expression of a tremendous upheaval that took place within the recesses of the being of the great sage who had this vision.

The central principle of the culture of the whole of Bharatvarsha can be said to be impregnated within this single small poem, the Purusha Sukta. All the scriptures are ramifications, commentaries, explanations, annotations, etc., of this central truth; or rather, we may say, the other way around, everything else that it said in the other parts of the Veda is a large commentary, as it were, on this little poem called the Purusha Sukta.

It is a poem where man contacts God. Man in his essence comes in contact with God in his essence; and to this day, it is the accepted tradition of the culture of this country that religion has to be life, actually. This is very important to remember. Religion is not what you do in the empirical sense; it is what you see with your eyes. What you see with your eyes is religion, not what you do with your hands and feet. If you perform worship with the hands, and see an image of stone with the eyes, you are not practising religion. If it is only a portrait that you are worshipping and the eyes see only a portrait while the hands are waving a sacred lamp, that is not religion. You may wave any lamp, you may do anything with your hands and mutter anything with your tongue, but what you *see* is your religion. If you see only a temple erected by a mason and a metal or stone image that is installed, this is not religion. So religion is vision, seeing, and nothing more, nothing less.

Here is India's religion before you, if you want to know what India's religion is. There is no nomenclature that can be attached to this religion. All these names that are associated with the forms of religion in the world are later developments in the history of mankind. A vision is not a racial prerogative. The one who had this vision of the Purusha of the Purusha Sukta was not a Hindu, was not a Christian, was not a Muslim. He was not a man. When man has vision of God, he no more remains as man because man is the name that we give to an embodiment whose faculty is a conglomeration of sense organs. You can recall to your mind the words of Sri Krishna as recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita: "These eyes cannot see Me." Arjuna's two eyes could not have the vision of the great Purusha who embodied himself in that description of the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

What the Purusha Sukta means in the Veda, the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita also means. They are one and the same. One is a Sruti, the other is a Smriti. By a Sruti we mean a sacred lore that has come down to us by the lineage of Guru and disciple. It has not come through libraries or textbooks. These sacred mantras were listened to by the disciple and chanted, recited or taught by the Guru.

As a little digression before I go into the meaning of the Purusha Sukta, I would like to mention the system followed in the study of the Veda in India. It is not like study in a college or university with which you are acquainted. The Veda cannot be chanted so easily. In a

way, we may compare the system of the study of the Veda mantras to the study of music. You cannot read a book of music and become a musician. It requires a practical guidance from a person who can sing for you. You have to listen to the singing, and then only you can learn music. A mere notation in a book will not be a sufficient aid in the learning of music.

The verses of the Veda are called mantras. There are Sanskrit poems called verses in English. There are two types of verses: one is called the Sruti, the other is called the Smriti. The verses of the Vedas are called mantras; they are not called slokas, because they are charged with a divine potency. The verses of all the other writings including the Bhagavadgita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Manusmriti, whatever it is, are called slokas: great sayings. A sloka is a well-said saying. And a mantra is distinguished from an ordinary verse in this sense, that a mantra is a vibration pressed into the configuration or form of a group of expressions called words or language. The mantra of the Veda is, therefore, condensed energy. It is not a word in an ordinary sense. It is not a language that you speak when you chant the mantra of the Veda. You are giving expression to a tremendous force, and therefore, your apparatus within also should be trained to receive the potency of the mantra which you are going to recite or chant. The modulation of the voice is very important – the intonation. As you hear raga in music, there is *swara* in the Veda. There are four feet of every mantra; and when the Veda mantra is taught, the teacher, the Guru, does not recite the whole at one stroke.

I am one of those, I should say, fortunate ones who had the occasion to study the Vedas under a very holy man, and I know how it is taught and how it is learnt. A foot is chanted first, and the student recites it three times. And the second foot is recited by the Guru; the student recites it thrice. The third foot is chanted; then the student chants it thrice. The fourth foot is chanted, and he recites it again three times. This goes on three times again. This recitation of a foot three times goes on three times, so it is nine times recitation of a single foot. Then the Guru chants two feet at one stroke. That is half the mantra, half the verse you may say, which again has to be conducted in the same manner: three times, three times, nine times again. So you know how many times it has been recited. Then the whole mantra is chanted, not only half, again three times. The process is repeated again three times, so that it is nine times once again. When this is completed, the student will know the whole mantra by heart automatically. He need not go on wracking his head. It is like mathematics. If this process is complete, you know it by heart automatically; immediately the mantra is complete, and you get up with great satisfaction: "Now I know what it is." See, what a system they have introduced! And likewise is every mantra.

Religious men study the whole Rigveda, for instance, which consists of some ten thousand mantras. Ten thousand! And to study it in this way, how much time will be necessary? Some four years, at least, must be taken. To study the four Vedas, it may take a large number of years – sometimes twelve years, at least.

Nobody studies the four Vedas. Each person is supposed to belong to one particular Veda, and I myself belong to the Rigveda school. Some belong to the Yajurveda school, and some the Samaveda. Nobody belongs to the Atharvaveda, as it is an appendix to the Veda. The religious essence of the Veda is in the three texts called Rig, Yajur, Sama; the fourth is only an appendix. That is not studied, generally. Well, so this is how the Veda mantras are recited – seated in a holy posture, facing the east, after washing the mouth and taking a bath, and not getting up until the study is complete.

The mantra is a great power. Why is it a power? Christ says somewhere in his gospel that what he spoke was not merely a word. It was spirit that came from his mouth. As I told you last time, all great men think alike. Whether it is a Christ or a seer of the Veda, they tell the same thing, finally. It is spirit that came out from the mouth of the great chanter of the mantra of the Veda; and when you are reciting it, you are getting en rapport with this great spirit that is enshrined in the mantra of the Veda.

Such a mantra is here before you in the form of the Purusha Sukta. How is it chanted? There are three types of intonation, sometimes a combination of all the three, the three being called *udatta*, *anudatta* and *svarita*. These are technical words of the Vedic language. You chant a passage with a lifted voice, and with a lowered voice, and without raising or lowering but with a middling voice. These are the three ways. And each mantra, each passage, each verse involves these three types of intonation. This

is the difficulty in the recitation of a mantra. There is the famous Mahamrityunjaya, for instance, which comes in the Veda and is a Veda mantra.

I am taking the Mahamrityunjaya as an example because you are all acquainted with it and are chanting it. There are three types of intonation in this mantra, if you have properly observed. Please listen to the way in which I am chanting it according to the accepted tradition. Tryambakaṃ yajāmahe – this is one foot. I mentioned to you there are four feet. Tryambakaṃ yajāmahe – that is one. The second foot: sugandhiṃ puṣṭivardhanam. Urvārukamiva bandhanān – that is the third foot. Mr̥tyor mukṣīya māmṛtāt is the fourth foot. Now tryam – that is elongated and raised; it is called *svarita*. Tryamba – the ‘ba’ is neither high nor low; it is just in the middle. It is ‘ba’, in the middling voice. Tryambakaṃ – ‘ba’ and ‘ka’ are in the middle. They are in a straight line. They don’t go up like tryam. Tryam has gone up. Tryambakaṃ yajāmahe – one line straight. Su – you have come down immediately. Sugandhiṃ – again you have gone up. So you see, the three intonations are in one foot itself. Tryambakaṃ yajāmahe. Su – you lower the voice. That is called *anudatta*. Sugandhiṃ – that is *svarita*. Puṣṭivardhanam – again down you have come.

How can you chant this unless somebody teaches you? You don’t know where it is to be up, where it is to be down; otherwise, it will be like broken music. Urvāru – you see, all the three are low. Ur vā ru – all the three are lower voice. Kamiva – again ‘mi’ goes up, and ‘va’ down. Bandhanān – ‘dha’ goes up. Mr̥t – again down. Mr̥tyor mu

– ‘mu’ goes up. Śīya – ‘ya’ is down. Māmṛtāt – the tāt goes up. I don’t know whether any of you know this. This is one example of a Veda mantra. Sometimes all the three are combined, and it is more difficult to chant it. I will not touch all these things just now.

Thus, these are techniques of intonation which change the meaning if the intonation changes. This is the speciality of a mantra as distinguished from an ordinary sloka or verse. Though the word may be the same, if the intonation changes, the meaning will change. You might have heard the ancient story where some gentleman wanted to produce a demon to attack Indra by the performance of a sacrifice through the chanting of certain mantras, and the performers of the sacrifice were not willing to produce such a demon. They did not want that some terrific force should come up and attack Indra. But somehow, without knowing the intention of the performer of the sacrifice, they had taken this engagement of performance, and they started the sacrifice. When it was started he said, “My intention is to produce this force to attack Indra.” They were in a very great perplexed mood. They said, “This is very strange. Do you want us to do this kind of sacrifice?” They could not say no, they could not say yes. Once they started they could not say no, but they cannot say yes either because they did not want to undertake this kind of enterprise. So they chanted the mantra as it was expected, but changed the tune. Immediately the effect was the reverse. A force was generated. Indra shatro vivardhasva. That was the

mantra: Enemy of Indra, rise up. That was the meaning of Indra shatro vivardhasva.

Now, the changing of the tune connoted some peculiarity there. The enemy can be one who attacks, or one who is attacked. Both can be meant by this word 'enemy'. So the changing of the intonation converted itself into the most unexpected significance: Great force, rise up to be destroyed by Indra. That meaning was introduced, instead of saying: Great force, get up to destroy Indra. That was the intention of the man who wanted to perform the sacrifice, but these people who changed the tune put another meaning into it: Great force, rise up to be destroyed by Indra. And you know the story. Vritra got up, and a great war took place, and Indra destroyed him.

Panini, in his Shiksha, also says this. Panini was a great sage who was a master of Sanskrit grammar and the phonetics of the recitation of the Veda. He said that if a Veda mantra is not chanted properly according to the required intonation, it may come back upon you like a thunderbolt. And so the tradition of India does not permit the purchase of a book from a shop and a reading of it for oneself. You cannot read a chemistry book or a physics book even, what to talk of the Veda mantras. This is by way of digression. I have given you some information about the importance of Veda mantras, the glory and the force and the potency that is hidden, etc.

Now we come to the Purusha Sukta proper which, as I said, is the foundation of the religion of Bharatavarsha, wherein the vision of the Supreme Reality is proclaimed

at the very outset, in the very beginning, in the first mantra itself. The Sukta says the Great Being has countless heads, countless eyes, countless hands and feet. *Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt, sa bhūmiriḥ viśvato vṛtvā'tyatiṣṭaddaśāgulam.* The immanence and the transcendence of the Supreme Being is declared in this one single mantra. In one mantra with four feet the integrality, the comprehensiveness, the absoluteness, the transcendence and the immanence, all are declared. Such is the concise form in which these great ideas have been expressed in this one single mantra.

When it is said it is a Being with countless heads and eyes and hands and feet, etc., we remember a parallel passage in the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita: *sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṁ tat sarvatokṣīsiromukham, sarvataḥ śrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati* (Gita 13.13). *Sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṁ*: Everywhere it has hands and feet, everywhere it has ears and eyes, says the Bhagavadgita. He is quoting the Purusha Sukta, as it were. As I told you, the whole religion of India, in every aspect of it, is centralised in the Purusha Sukta, and you can find there everything that is said anywhere else.

This Great Being is all eyes and all ears, all hands and all feet, all limbs, and pervading Earth and sky. The whole universe is pervaded by this Being: *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam* (Isa 1), says the Upanishad. The same thing is said here, even before that. The whole cosmos is pervaded by this Being. This is to declare the immanence of God.

Now you will realise that this immanence is of a very special nature. As you go forward, onward with the study of this Purusha Sukta, you will find that it is a novel type of immanence that is proclaimed here. I give you an example of an ordinary daily occurrence of immanence. You take a bath and wash your clothes. You put your clothes into a bucket of water. You will find that the water enters every fibre of the cloth. You may say that the water is immanent in the cloth – immanent water is inside the cloth. Every little bit of your cloth has been soaked in water. There is no part of the cloth which is not wet. The water is immanent in the cloth. But you know the cloth has not become the water, despite the fact that the water has entered every fibre of the cloth. Cloth is cloth, water is water. So this immanence is a very strange thing. It is an impregnation entering into the vitals of the substance, yet standing apart in one way. That is why in one passage of the Bhagavadgita the Great Lord says, “I am in all things, yet I am not in all things. I am in them, yet I am not in them. They are in Me, yet they are not in Me.” The water is in the cloth, yet it is not in the cloth, because you can wring it out and dry it, and find there is no water there. The cloth is once again the same cloth. So water can say, “I am in the cloth, yet I am not in the cloth.”

This is one type of immanence. Water entering into the cloth is one kind of immanence, but there is another kind of immanence: clay becoming a pot. Clay has been moulded into a pot, and clay is immanent in the pot. Now you see the difference between these two types of

immanence. You cannot wring the pot out of the clay and have only the pot minus the clay. That is not possible. When the clay goes, the pot also goes. But when the water went, the cloth did not go. So that is one kind of immanence, and this is another kind of immanence.

There has been a history of study, controversy and contemplation on the actual character of the immanence of God in this world, whether it is as water entering the cloth or as clay entering the pot. How did God enter the world? We shall not consider this controversy just now. However, the Purusha Sukta says that the Supreme Being has enveloped the whole cosmos, and if He has become the whole cosmos as clay has become the pot – the entire clay has become the whole pot, and there is no clay left out afterwards – there is no transcendence, there is only immanence.

God is not only immanence because if that had been the case, there would have been no creator of the universe. That the Creator always stands outside the universe is a great dictum of Aristotle, for instance. The cause of an effect cannot be identical with the effect. It has to be a little bit away; otherwise, it cannot be called a cause at all. The whole cause has become the effect. There is no cause. The creator of the universe cannot be exhausted in the universe; then, we cannot call him a creator. There is an element of transcendence in certain constitutions of government. The President, for instance, is a part of the whole nation, yet he stands above it in some respects as a super-constitutional head. He maintains some power which is super-departmental –

not in every form of government, but in certain forms of democratic or republic constitutions.

God seems to be transcendent in this way with a super-departmental power. He can set right everything in one stroke if He wants. But He will not interfere with the law operating, as the President does not interfere with the laws of the magistrate, court, etc., imagining that he is above everybody. It is a law that He has Himself set in and, therefore, the immanence participates in the requirements of the transcendent, as a constitution of the departments of the government may participate and associate with, yet not contradict, the supremacy of the President.

The Purusha Sukta says God envelopes the whole cosmos, yet transcends it – atyatistad. Atyatistad means ‘goes above’ in the homely language of the Veda. The Vedic language is very simple, homely, like a mother speaking, not like a professor proclaiming his knowledge in a college or a university. It is a mother or a father very lovingly speaking that is Veda. A homely example is given to a child: God is above the universe by ten fingers - ātyatiṣṭaddaśāgulam. By ten spans, as it were, He is above the universe.

By the word ‘ten’ we are supposed to understand that God is not exhausted in this world. He stands above the world also. He may be even one inch above, it does not matter; yet he is above the world. But the annotators, the understanders and the students of the Vedas tell us ‘ten’ does not mean merely the numerical distance of ten fingers’ length or ten inches, ten cubits, etc. Ten means

numberless, because there are only nine numbers in arithmetic. The last one is a zero. There is no such thing as a tenth number. One and zero make ten, and zero being not a positive numerical, it is excluded from the series. There are only nine numbers. So when you say that God has transcended the universe by ten cubits or ten spans, ten inches, etc., they say we are to understand that He has transcended infinitely, not only by a little length of space. Infinitely God transcends the universe, though infinitely He pervades.

Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt, sa bhūmiṃ viśvato vṛtvā'tyatiṣṭaddaśāgulaṃ. The declaration that He is all hands and feet, all eyes and heads, shows that He has no limbs. How can there be many things in one place? You cannot have eyes where there are ears. You know very well by common sense that where one thing is, another thing also cannot be there. So how is it said that He is everywhere hands and everywhere feet and everywhere eyes and everywhere heads? There is no meaning in this statement, because all things cannot be everywhere.

The idea is that He is neither eyes nor heads nor hands nor feet. These are only symbolic descriptions for our understanding, because we cannot understand anything except in an anthropomorphic, human way. It means He can see through the head, walk through the eyes, and speak through the lips. Every limb can perform every other function, not like us where only the eyes can see, only the ears can hear, and only the legs can walk. Every limb can perform every function; every atom of

creation can do anything. Every speck of space is filled with every kind of potency, and it is capable of doing anything. All might and supreme omnipotence is hidden within every speck of space, every unit of time, and every atom of man. Such is God's force. His very existence is force, His very being is power, and being and consciousness come together in the Supreme Being. This is the connotation hidden behind this symbolic statement that the Supreme Being is all eyes, all heads, etc. Such an inscrutable Almighty is immanent in the whole creation, and yet transcends it.

This is a short explanation of the first mantra of the Purusha Sukta. A little more about it I shall tell you later on.

Chapter 7

THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION IN THE PURUSHA SUKTA

All philosophical study is centred around four great themes: the nature of the Ultimate Reality, the process of creation, the status of the individual, and the mutual relationship among individuals, called society. The whole of philosophy is only this much – four themes. All these four themes are pressed into the Purusha Sukta in a very few words, so that we may say the whole of philosophy is here in sixteen mantras.

Yesterday I touched upon the subject of the characteristic of the Ultimate Reality as enunciated in the very first mantra of the Purusha Sukta: sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt. Actually, only the first half of the first verse is the foundational enunciation of the nature of the Supreme Being. From the second half of the first verse until a few mantras onwards, there is a very concise and pithy statement of creation: how the great Almighty, the One Being, encompasses all that can be regarded as the universe, the cosmos.

Recall to your memory one important point I referred to in this connection, namely, that the Supreme Being has no sense organs; and symbolically when it is said that it is all heads and all eyes and all feet and all hands, what the mantra implies is that it has no heads, no hands, no eyes, no feet, no limbs, because that which is everywhere

is really nowhere. That which is everything is equal to nothing.

In a similar fashion, we may say that every face of the Supreme Being is every other face at the same time. Anything that we can think of God is also any other thing that we can think of God at the same time. So the concept of God is a novel idea in our minds. It cannot be compared with any other idea related to things visible, audible, etc. God thinks and acts and feels and does all things at once, at the same time. His existence is His activity. While our activity proceeds from our existence, His existence is identical with His activity. Being is acting, being is knowing, being is force, being is all things. Everything is everywhere, timelessly and spacelessly.

Sa bhūmiṃ viśvato vṛtvā'tyatiṣṭaddaśāgulam:
Enveloping everything, He stands above infinitely, transcending the whole of creation. Puruṣa evedaṃ sarvaṃ yadbhūtaṃ yacca bhavyam. This Supreme Puruṣa, as the Almighty is designated in the Puruṣa Sukta, is whatever was, whatever is and whatever will be. Evedaṃ sarvaṃ: all this. Yadbhūtaṃ: whatever was. Yacca bhavyam: whatever shall be, whatever will be. Past, present and future are melted in the eternity of infinite comprehension.

The compactness of eternity is not a composite of past, present and future. It is not woven into a fabric by the threads of past, present and future, but an unimaginable, unthinkable, transcendent indivisibility which is not a combination of past, present and future

but something in which these three limitations of the time process are overcome completely as dream is overcome in waking, to give one instance.

The concepts which you are familiar with in your studies of the Vedanta philosophy – Ishwara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat, terms which do not occur in the Purusha Sukta – have a parallel series in this Sukta when, in a half mantra the Sukta says, *tasmādvirāḍajāyata virājo adhipūruṣaḥ*: From this all-comprehending Almighty, the Virat is born. The word ‘Virat’ occurs, but the word ‘Hiranyagarbha’, though it occurs elsewhere in the Rigveda in a sukta called the Hiranyagarbha Sukta, it does not occur in the Purusha Sukta. There is another sukta altogether called Hiranyagarbha Sukta in the Tenth Book of the Rigveda; that is a different matter. But the word Virat occurs. It is said here that the Virat is revealed as bodily coming out from this great Purusha; and the Purusha once again manifests himself through the Virat as the superintending principle of creation, known here in the language of the Purusha Sukta as *Adi Purusha*.

These terms sometimes, with a little variation, can be seen in the Bhagavadgita also, especially in the beginning of the eighth chapter. *Adhibhūtaṃ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhidevatam, adhiyajñoham evātra dehe dehabhṛtām vara* (Gita 8.4). These verses at the commencement of the eighth chapter of the Bhagavadgita refer practically to the manifestations stated in the Purusha Sukta in very precise, pithy and pregnant words. When God becomes the universe, He does not become something else.

Yesterday when I was casually speaking to a few people who were sitting in front of me outside on the veranda, I put a question, almost in a humorous way. In the beginning there was God, and there was nothing except God, and this is the fundamental principle of all religions. The Upanishad says this, the Bible says this, and every other scripture says this. There was God alone in the beginning. *Sad eva, saumya, idam agra asid ekam evadvitiyam* (Chhand. 6.2.1), says the Chhandogya Upanishad: Pure Being alone was there. One alone was. And that One Being manifested this universe. Or, to put it in more plain language, God created the world.

Now, we have to bring about a harmony between these two statements: “God alone was and there was nothing else outside Him, external to Him” and “God created the world”. From what substance did He create the world? The carpenter created the table out of wood; the mason created the building out of bricks. Out of what substance did God create the world if our earlier statement that God alone was, and nothing else could be, is to be true? So the Bible says God created the world out of nothing. Well, what else can we say? When it has been accepted that God alone was, the word was with God, and the word was God, how could we escape asserting that God created the world out of nothing? There was no substance, no wood, no brick, no mortar, no cement, nothing of the kind. This is not a very safe statement. Very serious consequences will follow from this statement that God created things out of nothing. I shall tell you what consequences follow from this.

There are others who think that it is meaningless to say that a substantial universe has been created out of nothing. The world is not a nothing; it is something. How can something come out of nothing? *Ex nihilo nihil fit* is a logical dictum. Nothing can come from nothing. If nothing was the cause of the universe, the whole universe is also a nothing, and we, as a part of the universe, also are nothing – a very strange conclusion indeed. We cannot stomach all these things. So it was opined that God created the world out of Himself, not out of nothing. Hence, this whole universe is God Himself manifesting in space and in time.

But this also has a serious consequence. It is not a very safe statement because if God has become this universe, we are subjecting God to the process of becoming. Being cannot be identified with becoming, because being is a timeless eternity, whereas becoming is a time process. We cannot subject the indivisibility of eternal being to the movement of the process of what we call time. Unless there is time present as an element involved in the process of creation, God transforming Himself into the world is inconceivable.

There are some philosophers, thinkers, religious theologians who think that God became the world as milk becomes curd, yoghurt. This is another interesting thing. Milk has become curd; like that, God has become the world. It looks very easy to say this, but hard to understand its implications. If milk has become curd, the whole of the milk has become curd. We cannot have only half the milk as milk, and half as curd. If the whole of

God has become the world, no further God is remaining that we may reach through our aspirations; and there will be nothing called moksha, inasmuch as curd cannot become milk once again. Yoghurt does not become milk; it has become yoghurt. Finished. The matter is over. So no moksha is possible; there is no such thing as that because moksha is curd becoming milk once again, and that is ruled out. Thus, there is a snag in this doctrine of the modification of God into the world because modification involves limbs, parts, spatio-temporal involvement. No modification is conceivable except in terms of space and time, and God is above space and time. So the doctrine that God became the world through a modification is also hard for the brain of man to comprehend. On the other hand, that He created the world out of nothing also seems to be very difficult to grasp.

Now we are landing ourselves in an impasse when we discuss the doctrine of creation. It was Acharya Sankara who, for the first time in the history of philosophy, boldly proclaimed that the doctrines of creation are not histories of events that took place in time. The process of creation described in the scriptures, whether it is in Hinduism or Christianity or Islam or wherever it be, is not a chronicle that a historian has written of events that actually took place in the process of space and time. In order that the seeds of modification or creation be sown at the outset, space and time should be there. But space and time are a part of creation; therefore, they could not be prior to creation, and unless they are prior, they could

not be creation. There is a very difficult subject before us, and without going too much into the details of these intricacies, inasmuch as our main theme is the Purusha Sukta, I shall bypass this problem by giving one simple example which will bring some sort of a satisfaction. How has creation taken place, whether it is a modification or it is a creation out of nothing, etc.?

This question can be solved by one analogy that you can bring before your mind by present-day observations in science. Imagine that there is a stone, a piece of granite, in front of you. When you open your eyes and look at the object, what do you see? A round, oblong-shaped object, hard to the touch – what you call a stone. This is what the eyes report to you. The eyes tell you, here is a hard stone. The eyes and the ears and the nose and the taste and the sense of touch always collaborate with one another in describing a particular object. There is no discrepancy among the reports of the five senses.

But if you bring a microscope and look at this very same stone, you will realise that you are not seeing the very same thing in the same manner as you saw it earlier. You will find it is a family of small members. It was not a round, hard stone. It is made up of small molecules. Go deeper with a stronger microscope and you will see they are not chemical substances called molecules, but indescribable units which are sometimes called atoms, with large spaces intervening between one atom and the other. Go deeper with an even stronger microscope. You will see a seeping energy rushing hither and thither in a hectic manner, and you will not see the molecules; you

will not see the atoms. You will see a tremendous activity billowing like waves in the ocean and an activity comparable only to an electromagnetic action, a field of force, a field of energy emanating from an electromagnetic setup. It is not a molecule, it is not an atom, it is something different, as you can imagine for yourself. You will see there is no rotundity or squareness or oblong nature of the object. It is a concretisation or a concrescence or a particularisation of a heap of force which has centralised itself in one speck of space, one point in time.

And now bring your doctrine of creation. You may say that this seeping energy has created the atom, the atoms have created the molecules, the molecules have created the stone. You may say that. Or you may say the energy has become the atoms, the atoms have become the molecules, the molecules have become the stone. Now, can you say that they have transformed themselves into the stone or the molecule, as milk becomes curd? You cannot say that there has been a transformation. You are only seeing things more and more clearly; that is all. You are not seeing a transformation of things. You cannot say that the atoms have transformed themselves into the molecules because if they have actually transformed themselves, they will be as molecules only, and cannot be anything else.

One thing cannot be seen in three different ways at the same time, because one thing cannot be more than one thing at one and the same moment of time. A is always A at one moment of time. A cannot be B. So if we

are seeing one and the same thing as A and B and C and D, it is very strange. It only means that the substance has not become A, B, C, D; we are only enhancing the intensity of our perception and employing a newer faculty of observation in the envisagement or insight into the very same object. As we cannot say that the force which is seeping in a concretised form has become, transformed itself, into the more concrete form, we cannot say that God has become the world. Yet, God is the world in the same way as the atoms are the stone.

Now, as the atoms have become the stone, so God has become the world. But as we cannot say that the atom has become the stone – they have not become; they are just what they are, even now – in the same way, we cannot say that God has become the world. So the process of creation, says Acharya Sankara, is an x in an equation. He does not use this word ‘ x ’, but I am telling you for your understanding. It is a kind of symbol we have introduced in the understanding of a great problem, and the symbol itself has no significance. It has no substantiality of itself. The x in the equation is not a numerical by itself, but its importance is known very well to every student of arithmetic. The x helps us in solving a great mystery of an equation, and then it is cancelled automatically when the equation is solved.

So the doctrine of creation is a ladder for us to climb to the pinnacle of the Ultimate Truth, but when we reach the roof, the ladder is no longer necessary. And even this analogy of a ladder is inadequate here because we will not even see the ladder afterwards, as x cannot be seen

afterwards when the equation is over. We see only the result. The means that we have employed is no more there.

So these strata of creation – Ishwara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat, the Adi Purusha mentioned in the Bhagavadgita or the Purusha Sukta – are the strata of our confronting, through the layers of our personality as it is now at this present moment of time in the present state of evolution, this great Almighty which has no degrees of reality in itself. Before the sunrise, we see things dimly as a homogenous mass. We cannot see the mountain in its clarity with the trees or the stones, with animals moving, etc. As the day breaks and the light becomes clearer and clearer, we will see things more and more clearly and our understanding increases. But it does not mean that merely because we see things more and more clearly, the things have become different. The things are the same; they have never changed themselves, or become something else. They have been seen in different ways because of the inadequacy of the apparatus of perception or understanding.

Thus, the Purusha Sukta comes down to the level of the cosmic appearance as this universe, and the whole of the Vedanta doctrine of creation is simply stated in three words of the Purusha Sukta when it says that the Almighty Purusha became the Virat, and Virat appeared as the multitudinous variety of this creation superintended over by the Adi Purusha, the Lord of the universe, the God Whom we worship in religions.

Then I told you that philosophical studies involve four themes: the great Reality, the process of creation, the status of the individual, and the society of human beings and of everything. The individual is nothing but a spark of this huge fire of God, and these are the gods of religions. Christianity speaks of angels, Hinduism speaks of devas, and every religion speaks of some divine beings. These divine beings, these gods, these celestials, these angels are the sparks which have been shot forth bodily, as it were, from this Almighty conflagration. This analogy, this picture, this image is given to us in the Mundaka Upanishad: Sparks emanate from fire; thus, individuals shoot forth from the Almighty.

The gods are supposed to be qualitatively almost equivalent to the Almighty Himself, though quantitatively they are very small sparks. We know fire is fire, even if it is a spark; but it is a spark in quantity, while a conflagration is such a large mass. In Hindu mythology and theology and in the Puranas we hear that the attendants of Lord Vishnu in Vaikuntha are also of the same form as Narayana himself. We cannot distinguish one from the other, so the attendant may be mistaken for Vishnu himself. He has four hands; he has *shankha*, *chakra*, *gada*, *padma*, and the same gorgeous appearance, but he is not Vishnu, he is not Narayana. Likewise, a spark may look like fire, but it is different from fire in the sense that it has not got the strength of the whole conflagration.

These devas were originally created. The first creations of God were angels. We do not speak of Adam

and Eve in the beginning itself. The angels come first, Adam and Eve afterwards. Human beings – Manu, Satarupa in Indian theology – also come later on. So these angels were the first manifestation of the one Supreme Light, which alone was as the Supreme Logos.

The Purusha Sukta continues. *Yatpuruṣeṇa haviṣā devā yajñamatanvata:* The great sacrifice was performed in the form of a cosmic worship by these angels in respect of the Almighty. The moment the angels were created, they offered their obeisance to the Almighty. “Great Lord, obeisance to Thee.” This is the first utterance or the first inward communion of utter harmony with the Almighty and at the same time implicit obedience to the Almighty. How was this obedience manifest? What was the first worship which was performed in creation?

We perform worship in temples and churches, but these gods, angels, also performed worship. They performed worship in the form of what can be called *yajna*. *Yajñena yajñamayajanta devāḥ*, says the Purusha Sukta. They performed a great sacrifice, a gorgeous worship of the Almighty, at the very outset in the beginning of creation. How did they perform this sacrifice? What was the worship that they offered to the Almighty? There were no flowers, no incense sticks, no place to sit, and no temple, no church, no buildings. What kind of worship or service can be offered? What sacrifice is practicable at that moment at the outset of creation when the spark has shot forth from the Almighty and it’s beholding the great vision as Arjuna

saw, as described in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita?

Yajñena yajñamayajanta: They performed the sacrifice through the sacrifice. The material was the Purusha himself, not some flower that is purchased from the shop, not some incense stick from a bazaar, not some water brought from a river. There were no rivers at that time. No vessels were there, and no ground on which to sit. In such a predicament of proximity to the terrible Almighty, the sparkling effulgences of the angels – the celestials, the devas – contemplated; and the contemplation itself was the sacrifice and the worship. So the highest worship is contemplation; the greatest sacrifice is meditation. The greatest martyrdom, we may say, of the spirit of the angel was a surrender of his very being to the Almighty Presence. This was the original sacrifice, and this was the origin of law; this is the origin of dharma. Yajñena yajñamayajanta devāḥtāni dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan.

Tāni dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan. These sacrifices that they performed, this worship that was offered to the Almighty at the beginning of creation by the gods, was the origin of all law, regulation, constitution and dharma, in essence. Oh, wonderful! This contemplation of the Almighty by the divine celestials was the seed of the law of the cosmos – *rita* or *satya* in the language of the Veda. *Satya* is the word used in the Veda to designate the law of the indivisibility of the Absolute. *Rita* is the law of the Absolute as manifest in the cosmos of space and time, from which all dharmas emanate, and every law is determined by that central organisational principle. Tāni

dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan. All enactments in the parliament, all regulations in human society and all principles followed in mutual relationship among individuals should be conditioned by the original law which was the dharma of the Absolute as contemplated in the minds of the sparkling gods. What was this dharma? This dharma was the dharma of sacrifice – *yajna*, to repeat once again.

I had occasion to mention at other times also that the culture of Bharatavarsha is summed up in one word – *yajna*. If anybody asks what is Indian culture, *yajna*, sacrifice, is our culture. What is *yajna*? It is sacrifice, to translate it into a simple English term. What is sacrifice? It is that intricate relationship that you establish between yourself and the Almighty through all the strata of manifestations of Himself. So in the act of sacrifice, in the act of worship, in the act of doing anything in this world for the matter of that, you simultaneously establish a relationship with all the manifestations of God.

I will give you another example of how to understand this difficulty. There is a democratic government, and there is a central figure called the President, and he lays down a constitution through a parliament. The parliament elects ministers called the cabinet. The cabinet forms the system of working in the various provinces or states, as they are called. Each state has its own secondary minister or a secretary. Each province or state is divided again into districts. Each district has a head called the collector or the magistrate, and under him there are so many revenue officials, and below these

revenue officials there are small petty officials who look to the organisation and welfare of small villages. This is the lowest strata of the government. Now this little man, who has a small authority over a little village, may appear to be confined only to the law of that little village, for all practical purposes. He is not concerned with bigger things. He may not even know that there is a man called the President. It is not necessary.

But we know very well this little relationship of legal management that he is conducting in a small village is conditioned by the immediately higher organisation, which again is conditioned by the immediately higher, immediately higher, immediately higher, until the last point is reached where we have the original seed of the enactment of law. So in a single little act of this smallest official in a village he has at once unconsciously, as it were, established a harmonious relationship with the highest law-making feat. Though he may not be aware of all these little things that are involved in his act, he does not contradict even his littlest act in a village. Any law may operate upon him through the various strata of the descent of this law through these layers in a particular democratic setup of government.

Likewise is every one of us. We are small beings, little nothings practically. Nobody wants us. Yet a little so-called insignificant behaviour of ours is a dharma that we are manifesting out of ourselves. It is a law unto itself. When you behave or conduct yourself in a particular manner, or say something, do something or even think something, you have moved the whole cosmos into

action, just as when the little official in the village has done something, he has touched the layers of all the manifestations of the law of the republic and government.

Imagine how careful you have to be in living in this world. You cannot say you can go scot-free and do something in a little teashop unknown to people, and nobody is seeing you. Everybody is seeing you in the little shop. Even when you have a sip of tea in a dark corner of a shop in Rishikesh, the Almighty sees. Be very careful.

In the same way, the law sees with its long arms through every little act of every official in the development of the administration of a country. This is an explanation of the way in which the original dharma of the sacrifice of the gods in respect of the Almighty's presence conditions every other dharma in this world. Therefore, it is said these worships they offer, this sacrifice that was made in the presence of the Almighty merely by the act of contemplation, is the original dharma: *tāni dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan*.

Now, we have touched upon three important themes of philosophical considerations: the Ultimate Reality, the process of creation, and the individuals originating in the angels, the gods, parts of the cosmic fire who gradually descend into the more manifest forms of individuals like us.

Many of you might have read Plato's Republic, for instance. The philosophy of Plato envisages the realm of ideas. These ideas are not your idea and my idea. I have an idea that I am sitting here, and you have an idea that

you are listening to me. This is not the idea that Plato is thinking of. The Idea – with ‘I’ capital, if you like – is the contemplation of Plato’s philosophical mind of what we are calling angels, gods, celestials, etc., the originals of the duplicates which we are of. Plato thinks these are all duplicates of an original prototype which is in the realm of ideas, and this is a world of sense, and he calls that as the realm of reason. It is not the ordinary reason that we are using in courts and mathematical solutions. It is the pure reason of the spirit, the angel that is in you. You are also an angel in your essence, but you have become very gross by descending into this body. So this Idea that Plato speaks of corresponds to the angels of our religions, or the gods or the devas of the Purusha Sukta.

And sometimes it is said all marriages take place in heaven first; they are celebrated on Earth afterwards. It is not only marriages; every event takes place in heaven first. Even a war takes place in heaven first. Even a disease originates in heaven first, and it comes down to the level of the body and society afterwards, as great thinkers have told us that the originals condition and determine the processes of the manifestation and activity of the duplicates or their manifestation.

So we are not doing things wholly independently, as we are prone to think. We are limited by the original realm of the ideas or the originals we ourselves were at the beginning of creation, and these originals that we were are the conditioning factors of the present movements of ours as gross bodies, as individuals, as human beings.

Much has been pressed into these few words of the Purusha Sukta. Something more about this theme has to be thought over by us, a subject I shall take up afterwards.

Chapter 8

TRUE RENUNCIATION – THE POOR IN SPIRIT

We could discover a great meaning in the foundational vision of the Purusha Sukta of the Veda, as we noticed last time.

The quintessential purport of the Veda is supposed to be embodied in what is known as the Vedanta, by which term what is intended is the conclusion that can be drawn from the variegated proclamations through the mantras of the Veda.

Hence, the Upanishads, which conclude the Vedas, go by the name of the Vedanta. The word ‘*anta*’ in Sanskrit may mean the end, or it may mean the final meaning; the purport, the central objective is the *anta*. The vast area covered by the mantras of the Veda converges upon the meaning of the Vedanta, which is embodied in the Upanishads. The Upanishads form mostly the tail end of a large literature called Veda-rashi. The Veda is divided into four sections known as the Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad.

The Purusha Sukta is an example of a piece from this Samhita, which consists of hymns, psalms, prayers, or addresses to the great Deity in various ways. The Brahmanas represent the codification of the practical usage in religious ritual of the mantras embodied in the Samhitas.

Human life is external as well as internal. It is also transcendent, going beyond both the external and the

internal. Thus while the Brahmanas may be regarded as representing the external application of the intention of the Veda mantras, the Aranyakas are supposed to be the internal intention of the very same Vedas. The external intention is the Brahmana, the internal one is the Aranyaka, and the mantra, which is the Samhita, can be interpreted in either way.

In fact, tradition believes that it is difficult to know the entire meaning of the mantras of the Veda Samhita because they can be applied to the various fields of life. *Adhiyajna* is the field of sacrificial performance, on which much emphasis is laid in the Brahmanas. *Adhibhuta* is the physical atmosphere, the astronomical universe, to which also the Veda mantras bear relevance. There is not merely ritual of the religious type implied in the Veda mantras, but also even physical science, not excluding even mathematics. *Adhyatma* is the internal meaning to which we move when we go to the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. *Adhidharma* is the field of law, rule, system of living, the principle of behaviour and conduct, morality proper, whose principles are also to be discovered in the very same mantras of the Veda.

So the Veda Samhita is all-comprehensive gospel – *adhiyajna*, *adhyatma*, *adhibhuta*, *adhideva*, representing the divinities who are addressed in the mantras. And the *adhyatma*, which is the internal meaning, is touched upon in the Aranyakas. The word ‘*aranyaka*’ suggests that these texts were studied in secluded places – *aranyas*, or forests, not in urban areas.

The final meaning of even the Aranyakas is the Upanishads. The Upanishad is the secret teaching. Aranyaka is a learning in seclusion, and the Upanishad is a mystical secret doctrine which is not openly taught to untrained disciples.

Each section of the Veda has its own group of Upanishads. We have today the most important ones, sometimes known as the 108 Upanishads, but mostly limited to ten in number – called the Dasa Upanishads – on which the philosophers of India have given their commentaries. Only one Upanishad, known as the Isavasya, does not belong to the Brahmana or the Aranyaka. It belongs to the Samhita portion – only one. All other Upanishads belong to the Brahmanas or the Aranyakas. The concluding portion of the Yajurveda Samhita is the Isavasya Upanishad.

The foundational religious vision embodied in the Purusha Sukta is a directive to practical living. At the very commencement of the Isavasya Upanishad we have a gateway opened, as it were, to put into practice this vision that is embodied in the Veda mantra, especially the Purusha Sukta. Almost the same thing is repeated in the very first few words of the Isavasya Upanishad: *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ* (Isa 1). *Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ* (Purusha Sukta 1) says the Purusha Sukta: The Universal Being is all heads and all eyes and all things. This is another way of saying the universe is pervaded by the Supreme Being. And the Isavasya Upanishad says, *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*: All this is pervaded by the Supreme Lord. This is an equal, as it were, of the Veda

mantra. That Lord pervades not merely living beings, but even what we call inanimate matter, is one facet of the expression of this Almighty.

Jagatyām jagat: The moving and the non-moving are both indwelled by the same Lord. There is no distinction between the living and the non-living, on an ultimate analysis. The non-living, or the animate so-called, is a dense form of the expression of the same power that permeates the whole cosmos. When it becomes translucent, it becomes the animal level. When it is transparent, it is the human. Thus, that which is moving and that which is not moving, that which is living and that which is not living, organic as well as inorganic, both these are pervaded by the Supreme Almighty.

Last time, we had occasion to understand the meaning of this pervasion. I gave two examples. Water pervades cloth when it is dipped in water, and clay pervades a pot, of which it is an embodiment. These two are classical examples of the pervasion of the cause in the effect. The Supreme Being is the cause, the universe is the effect. Clay is the cause, pot is the effect. Clay pervades pot and water pervades cloth in two different senses; and God pervades the universe, perhaps, in both these senses and in either way. *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiṁ ca jagatyām jagat.* The concept of the Ultimate Reality decides our conduct in life. All questions get automatically solved by the way in which we are able to conceive the nature of the Supreme Being.

Differences in the outlooks of life among human beings arise on account of the differences of the

conception of the Ultimate Reality, which means to say, the conception of the relationship that obtains among God, the world and the individual, which automatically follows from our notion of the nature of Reality. The schools of thought, the philosophies especially prevalent in India known as the Darshanas, are classical examples of these diversities of opinion prevalent among the notions of the Ultimate Reality. However, God pervades the world in every sense of the term. We may take it in the sense of the Nyaya or the Vaishesika or the Sankhya or the Vedanta, and in every sense the pervasive aspect of God in the universe is applicable. Knowing this, be happy in this world.

Tena tyaktena bhujñitha, ma grdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam. This first verse of the Isavasya Upanishad is regarded by many people in India as the sum and substance of Indian philosophy, Indian theology, and the Indian doctrine of living. All these are pressed into these few words of a single mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad. Here we have ontology, theology, psychology, and practical life in only a few words. How are we to live in this world? By renouncing, we have to live in this world – tyaktena bhujñitha. What sort of renunciation are we expected to participate in, or effect into our life? The word '*tena*' explains the type of renunciation that we are called upon to embody in our life. A very intriguing term is this small word '*tena*'. 'Therefore' is one meaning of the word *tena*. 'By Him, by that, by which' is another meaning. Sanskrit words often have several meanings,

and enigmatically, pithily, aphoristically, the mantra tells us in a quarter verse: Enjoy by renouncing.

Nobody enjoys by renouncing. Renunciation is a kind of sorrow. Renunciation is actually regarded by people as the abandonment of the values of life – social values, political values, family circumstances, possessions of every kind, relationships of every type. All these things are the sources of joy in this world, and we should renounce all these relationships and then be happy? How could one be happy by renouncing all sources of happiness which are the relationships that we establish with the objects of the world? We are happy when we are in a very benevolent and friendly family. We are happy when we are in a society where friendly relationship is obtained. We are happy when we possess the wealth of the world, and renunciation is just the opposite of this doctrine of possession. To possess is to enjoy. This is how we interpret things in this world. The more I possess things, the more is my happiness, and the Upanishad says, “Renounce and be happy”. What sort of renunciation is suggested in this mantra is a matter to consider.

“Inasmuch as the Lord pervades all things” is a clause that has to precede this injunction that you have to enjoy by renouncing. The second half is connected to the first half. All that is inanimate and animate is pervaded by the Supreme Being, and therefore, enjoy by renouncing. What is this ‘therefore’? What is its significance? Because of the fact that the whole universe is possessed by the Universal Being, therefore you have no possessions.

Perhaps you are also possessed by the Lord as one of the contents of this creation. Since you are a part of that which God possesses, envelopes, indwells, pervades, you have no special prerogative of enjoyership. Perhaps you have not the prerogative of even doership. That you are neither a doer nor an enjoyer follows from the fact of the pervasion of the universe by the Lord. There is no need to give a large commentary on this simple truth. If the Lord pervades the universe as clay pervades the pot, we would not be able to conduct even our thinking process as people involved in this pot universe in which the clay absolute inheres.

The illustration of clay and pot brings out a very important significance of the cause being even the material of the effect. It is not merely an instrument in the production of the effect. God is not like a carpenter manufacturing the table of the universe. He is not like a potter manufacturing a pot, standing outside the substance which is manufactured. The cause stands outside the effect in the case with the carpenter in relation to the tools that he makes; but as distinguished from this example, we have this immanent doctrine of the pervasion of the cause in the effect in a different sense altogether, as clay pervades pot, which means to say the clay exists in the pot: the cause is the effect. The cause is not merely in the effect; the clay is not merely in the pot, it is the pot. God is not merely in the world, He is the world. If this is true, which seems to be the fact if we are to understand the meaning of the first half of this mantra

jagatyām jagat in this way, then we would be nowhere in this world, in the kingdom of God.

You know very well, the highest source of bliss is God-Being. The nearer you are to God, the happier you are. Your approximation to the Ultimate Reality is what makes you happier. The nearer you are to the Absolute, the happier you are. The nearer you are to the sun, the greater is the warmth that you feel. The farther you are, the greater the chillness that you feel. The greater is the sorrow of man, the greater is the distance between him and God. And where is this distance?

The distance between man and God is abolished in one stroke by the introduction of this great doctrine of the Isavasya Upanishad that the whole universe is pervaded by the Lord, indwelt by the Lord, and ruled by the Lord. God rules the kingdom of heaven, and the whole universe is the kingdom of heaven, inasmuch as He rules all things. We, therefore, live in the kingdom of heaven even now. Well, we are not merely living in a kingdom, we are equally pervaded by the presence of the Almighty – *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*. Therefore, possession is unthinkable in this world. No one can possess anything in this world because objects are pervaded by the Lord. The subjects are equally pervaded by the Lord. You and I both are equally indwelt by the Supreme Being. The things of the world which you would like to possess are as much the indwelling vehicles of God as you yourself are. How would you possess anything in this world? Therefore, renounce possession-ship. Possessiveness has to be abandoned. When you

abandon the sense of possession on account of the realisation of the fact that things in the world are not objects actually but they are dwelling places of the Almighty, even as you are, you cannot possess anything in this world.

There is no such thing as property. It does not exist. The idea of property is an illusion in the mind. Nobody can possess anybody else in this universe of interrelated existences and values. There is a commingling of principles in this universe. Which part of the body is the possessor, and which part of the body is the possessed? Let us see. In this body of ours with many limbs, which part is possessed by which part? Nobody possesses, and nobody is possessed, because of the absence of the need for possession. The need for possession ceases. When the need itself is not there, where comes the question of possession? The urge to possess the objects of the world arises on account of not recognising the indwelling principle of God, and if God is the centre of all bliss, happiness, this non-recognition will be tantamount to entering into an abyss of sorrow.

Hence, renunciation, the *tyaga* that is indicated in the Isavasya Upanishad, is a very subtle point which it is not easy to grasp unless you are careful. We all renounce things. I have no connection with my family. I have no connection with anything. I am independently living in a *kutir*, in a cottage, in a forest, so I am a renounced individual. This may be the idea of a religious seeker. But the Upanishad does not tell us to be physically away from things in order that we may renounce, because physically

being away from anything is impossible in this kingdom which is pervaded by the Almighty in every nook and corner. You cannot go outside the world, and therefore, you cannot renounce anything. If you can go outside the world, you can say you have renounced the world; but you are standing on the world, in the world, and you say you have renounced. Renunciation is, therefore, not a spatial distance that exists between you and the object that you would like to possess. Nothing of the kind is what is intended here. It is a consciousness, an awareness of there being no such thing as possession in the world, and therefore, at every point in space, in every part of the world, you are a renouncer. You can be a highest renouncer inside a huge factory and seated inside the Bank of England or the Reserve Bank of India. You need not go to the Himalayas to renounce. Therefore, be happy.

How does happiness follow from renunciation? Because by the renunciation of the idea, the notion or the sense of possessionship, you get nearer to God. It is the sense of possession that cuts you off from God. The idea of possession of things, attachment to anything in this world, arises on account of your involvement in spatial distance and temporal process – space and time. But God pervades all things: *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*. He pervades even space and time; therefore, space and time cannot demarcate one thing from the other. Hence, you cannot possess anything.

So when you are able to contemplate this situation of non-involvement in spatial distance and temporal

process, you are almost on the lap of God. You have contacted God in one second, as it were, by refusing to admit the spatial distance and temporal procession, and therefore, at the same time, renouncing in spirit, and not merely geographically, socially, politically. Blessed are the poor in spirit, says the Gospel. You must be poor in spirit, not poor in cloth and living in a thatched hut. The poor in spirit is the one who is emptied of all content in the spirit, which means to say, emptied of all sense of the possessive attitude, which is the content of our spirit. When the spirit stands independent of all objective content, it is the spirit which is poor, and such a spirit is blessed.

This spirit is finally inseparable from the Supreme Spirit because when the idea of possession is removed, it leads you at the same time to the consequence that should follow spontaneously. The nearness to God, which is the enhancement of our happiness, is insured by the diminution of the distance between us and God achieved by an overcoming of the sense of space and time. The more you renounce, the more are you happy, therefore. But you must renounce in spirit; otherwise, physically you may be a renunciate, while mentally you may be a wealthy individual. You may be contemplating gorgeous experiences of the senses and the mind, reveries, and building castles in the air. It is the mind that liberates, and it is the mind that binds. The world does not bind, and the world does not do anything for you. *Mana eva manuṣyāṇāṃ kāraṇaṃ bandhamokṣayoḥ, bandhāya piṣyāsaktaṃ muktaṃye nirviṣayaṃ smṛtam*

(Amrita Bindu Upanishad 2): Mind alone is the cause of the bondage and the freedom of the individuals. That mind which is connected to an external object of sense is the source of bondage; that mind which transcends relationship with objects is the source of freedom. This is the meaning of this verse.

Renouncing the sense of possessiveness on account of the recognition of the fact of the all-pervading nature of the Lord, enjoy. How do you enjoy? You do not indulge in the objects of the senses when it is said that you will enjoy. The question of indulging does not arise on account of this peculiar renunciation in which you have participated divinely. You enjoy as God Himself enjoys, as it were. God's happiness is God's existence. *Satchidananda* is the definition of the Supreme Being: Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. The consciousness of existence itself is bliss. It is not the consciousness of possession, but the consciousness of existence.

But in our case today in this empirical realm, consciousness of the existence of wealth somewhere in somebody's treasure chest does not become the source of happiness. We must possess it. The mere existence of wealth somewhere does not bring us satisfaction. We must possess. But in the case of God, the very existence, *sat*, the *chit* of *sat* is also *ananda* at the same time. Consciousness of existence is the same as bliss. Therefore, it is not consciousness of existence and bliss, but it is consciousness which is existence, inseparable from what happiness is.

Limitation is the source, the cause of pain and sorrow, and it is the finitude and the limitations in which we are involved that makes us run to objects of sense. We try to grab objects, possess things, under the impression that our finitude would be annulled. We become infinite by coming in contact with many finites. This is what we wrongly think. Any amount of possession of finitude will not make you the Infinite, and all happiness is nothing but a touch of the Infinite given to the process of thinking. You cannot be happy unless an element of infinitude is present in you. Even when sense objects are enjoyed, without your knowing what is happening, you are contacting the Infinite for a split of a second; otherwise, you cannot be happy. Unless God contacts you and you contact God, you can never be happy here even for a moment of time. You will be perpetually in hell if God were not to be contacted, knowingly or unknowingly.

The psychology of possession, enjoyment of objects of sense, would reveal that at the time of possessing and enjoying the desired object, the mind reverts to its source, contacts the Atman within, contacts the Infinite itself, as it were. Not knowing that this is taking place, foolishly the mind ceases thinking of the object of sense under the impression that it has possessed it, and therefore, it need no more think of it, while simultaneously it has entered the borderland of a non-possessive realm where it has stopped thinking and yet is conscious. A state where you are consciousness, and yet you do not think, is God-consciousness. It is

consciousness where there is no thinking but there is only being. But this is an experience that we pass through for an infinitesimal fraction of a second, and therefore, we are in a state of rapture and in a state of great thrill when we get what we want. But this thrill has come from within, and not from the thing that we possess.

Hence, God is the source of happiness. The Infinite is what gives us happiness here. The renunciation, the *tyaga* enjoined upon us in the Isavasya Upanishad's first mantra is a spiritual transvaluation of values – entering the kingdom of heaven, as it were, and possessing nothing – not because there are no things in this world, but because they are not outside us.

The need to possess a thing arises on account of its being outside us. But things are not outside us. You know very well why it is so. As nothing is outside us, nothing can be possessed, and therefore, you are perpetually in a state of renunciation. Renunciation, *tyaga*, is regarded as a quality of God. *Aisvaryasya samagrasya viryasya yasasa sriya, jñana-vairagyayos caiva anna bhaga iti gana* (Vishnu Purana 6.5.79). God is called Bhagavan. Bhagavan is one who has *bhaga*. And what is *bhaga*? This verse says, *aisvaryasya samagrasya*: one who has reached the pinnacle of all glory, prosperity – *viryasya yasasa sriya* – of fortune, of energy and strength, of knowledge and of renunciation. In God you reach the pinnacle of renunciation. God is the greatest renouncer because He possesses nothing. He does not possess anything because he indwells everything – *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*. So it is not like a beggar who does not possess things. It is a state

of not possessing things on account of being identical with all things. So there is a difference between God not possessing things and a beggar not possessing things. Both do not possess anything, for two different reasons altogether.

The nearer you go to this state of non-possession in the light of the pervasion of God in the universe, the greater are you a renouncer, and therefore, the happier you are – tena tyaktena bhujñitha. Therefore, says the Upanishad, don't covet wealth – ma grdhaḥ kasyavid dhanam. There are two meanings of this little saying. Do not covet the wealth of anyone. This is one meaning. Do you know why you should not covet the wealth of anyone? The reason behind it is laid down in the first half: īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam yat kiṁ ca jagatyāṁ jagat. The other meaning is, "Whose is this wealth?": kasyavid dhanam. Therefore, do not be greedy. Who is the possessor of wealth, and whose is this wealth? Whose is this world? Who is this owner of this property of the world?

Nobody can be regarded as the owner of the properties of things, since the things of this world, the wealth of this world, does not belong to anybody. As all things belong to God, nothing belongs to any individual. Neither I belong to you, nor you belong to me, but both of us belong to somebody else. Hence, one is not a possessor of another in this world. Exploitation is completely ruled out. No exploitation is permissible in this world ruled by God and indwelt by God. You cannot utilise me, and I cannot utilise you. What a grand

gospel of perfect living we have here in this little passage of the Isavasya Upanishad! Whose is wealth? God's is wealth. Therefore, ma gr̥dhaḥ: do not be covetous, do not be greedy.

Yet, there is a doubt in the mind. One seeker in the ashram came to me the other day. "How long am I to work in the ashram?" he asked me. "I have taken to sannyas. I am a monk. Still I have to work? How long will I be in this bondage of work, Swamiji?" He put this question to me.

The answer to this question is given in the second mantra: kurvann eveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet śataṁ samāḥ, evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare. Why are you afraid of action? Why are you afraid of anything at all? But the karma will not bind you. The question, "How long have I to work like this even after I take sannyas?" arises because the meaning of action has not been understood properly. We are told again and again that action is binding. Renunciation of action is freedom. Renunciation of action is not freedom. Renunciation of things is not freedom. This again is the great doctrine of the Bhagavadgita, with which you are all well acquainted. Arjuna said, "I shall renounce. I shall take sannyas and renounce all activity. I shall go begging for alms."

But what does Sri Krishna say? "What a foolish man you are! How can you avoid action in a world which is perpetually active? The whole universe is incessantly evolving in even the minutest parts, or the core of it. Not even a single atom in this universe is inactive. Arjuna,

you say you will be inactive and you will take sannyas of inactivity?”

This is what the Isavasya Upanishad has told even before the Bhagavadgita was written. Many people think, historians of philosophy say, that the Bhagavadgita takes certain ideas from the Isavasya Upanishad and also the Katha Upanishad. Perhaps there is some truth in it. Action does not bind.

After having said all this much in regard to the first mantra or verse of the Isavasya Upanishad, a doubt still persists. “What is my daily duty in this context of what you have said just now? What am I supposed to do every day? You have threatened me with this great doctrine of the pervasion of God, and the glory of renunciation in this sense of the term as inculcated in this mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad. Now what happens to me? I get up in the morning, and what am I to do?” The answer to this question is in the second mantra. I shall explain it to you next time.

Chapter 9

PARTICIPATING IN THE UNITY OF KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

Throughout the process of history, religious life, which is emotionally associated with the existence of God, has often stood in contradiction to the workaday life of mankind. The conflict between knowledge and action has been an age-old problem. Is knowledge opposed to action; is action opposed to knowledge? There have been protagonists of both sides. The Mimamsa philosophy, famous in India, tirelessly proclaims that knowledge is an incentive to action, that knowledge propels you to act or conduct yourself in a particular manner toward the achievement of an end which is beyond knowledge. Knowledge is not an end in itself; it is an enlightenment which precedes a conduct, a behaviour, an adventure or a work that is to be done. After you know something, you do something. You do not merely know something and keep quiet. So the Mimamsa doctrine of action holds that every regulation, every law, every rule is a propulsion to do something. An aphorism, a sutra, from Mimamsa says: You do not sit tight doing nothing after you know dharma or law. Dharma is an incentive to action. Knowledge gives you an understanding of the way in which you have to conduct yourself in life, or do something in the field of day-to-day existence.

This seems to be an easily acceptable fact from the point of view of an ordinary commonplace observation.

No one keeps quiet after knowing a fact. The knowledge of a fact is expressed in an implementation of some thought. But the doctrinaires of knowledge hold that action is opposed to knowledge because, as a whole, every incentive to action is an acquiescence in the finitude of the individual, and an inadequacy of knowledge in the proper sense of the term is the reason behind any kind of impulsion from inside.

There are two extreme camps. You may call them, if you like, the right and the left – one holding that knowledge is supreme and all action ceases on the attainment of knowledge, and the other camp holding that action can never cease and knowledge is only a help in performing action more dextrously.

The Isavasya Upanishad, to which we made reference yesterday, has tackled this problem, and on the basis of which or in consonance with which, we may say, the Bhagavadgita has its doctrine of karma yoga. This is a highly intricate technique, not easy to understand because generally people get tired of work. Man cannot easily accept that he is born only to act, to work hard and sweat throughout life. A question arises within oneself, “How long will I go on working like this? I have to retire.” There is a desire to retire from work. If this desire were not there, there would be no retirement from any kind of activity. We get tired, fatigued, exhausted, or fed up, or we feel that there is no necessity to act any more on account of having achieved what we wish to achieve through action. We act because we have to achieve an end which has not yet been attained. But once I have a

grip on the goal I wish to reach, the means thereof drops automatically.

The first verse of the Isavasya Upanishad automatically gives rise to the second verse: *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiṁ ca jagatyāṁ jagat, tena tyaktena bhūñjitha, ma ḡṛdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam*, the meaning of which I tried to explain yesterday. The consequence which follows from this great dictum of the omnipresence of God is a regulation of human activity and an alignment of human existence with God-being. It is necessary that the recognition of the presence of the Almighty everywhere within and without has to be reconciled with our final existence.

Kurvann eveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet śataṁ samāḥ: You should aspire for a long life. You should not curse life. “Let me go quickly. Wretched is life; the earlier I go, the better.” Make no such statements. The life of man is not so wretched as it appears. Nor is it heaven. *Na-abhinandeta maraṇaṁ na-abhinandeta jīvitam* (Manu Smṛiti 6.2.153). The Manu Smṛiti says you have no right either to praise or condemn. “How beautiful is this world!” This statement is not correct. “How idiotic is this world!” This statement also is not correct. It is not so nice as it may appear to your eyes, and also it is not so stupid as it may appear sometimes.

What you call life is the placement of your personality in the context of God’s creation. This much is life. You are placed in a particular station in this vast atmosphere you call the creation of God. You know very well that you are inside this creation, a part of this

creation, a part in a very vital sense, in a sense of a living relationship with the mighty expanse of God's creation – a living relationship, not a mechanical contact. Our relationship with things in this world is vital, living, organic, integral, inseparable, not mechanistic, not a dead relation. We are not corpses, and nothing in the world is a corpse.

The Creative Will of the Supreme Being is pulsating through the veins of every individual, and this urge of the Creative Will of God is felt even in a minute atom. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, in its doctrine of creation, tells us that God became two from the state of His Supreme Oneness, by which the Upanishad intends to convey that the one integral All-being became the subject on one side and the object on the other side. God was the seer as well as the seen. He could declare regarding Himself: I am what I am. Even to declare in this manner, there should be an element of supreme subjectivity which envisages its own subjectivity as a cosmic objectivity – something beyond our heads.

The Self-consciousness of God is referred to in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: *aham asmi* – I am. This cosmical sense of the I-amness of God is the first step taken by Him in the act of creation. In the originality of the Absolute, there is not even the sense of I-amness. There is no subject and predicate in the Supreme Being. There is no 'am'. The verb 'am' cannot be applied to God. But in the initial step in the direction of the creation of the cosmos, the stage of I-amness, or I-am-what-I-am, supervenes. This is what the Vedanta speaks of as

Ishwara or Hiranyagarbha, and here the universe is organically involved in God's existence. The universe has not come out.

But when there is a consciousness of the universe having been created, God as Supreme Subject is counterpoised to the universe as Supreme Object. The universe is one object and not many objects, and the observer of this single object is the single subject, the great mighty Creator. God visualises His creation as a single observer of a single object which is spread out before His cosmic eye, and there is a condensation of this cosmic sense, and it descends into greater and greater densities of formation and concretisation until one is split into the isolated subject and the isolated object, in the process of which condensation of the original sense we have these principles known as *tanmatras*, *mahabhuta*, etc. – *shabda*, *sparsha*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*; *prithivi*, *apah*, *tejas*, *vayu*, *akasha*: earth, water, fire, air, ether, and so on.

But there is a further coming down when the observer of the universe ceases to be a supreme individual but a finite thinking unit, one among the many others, the state in which we are today. Here we are in a state of utter finitude involved in a physical or bodily encasement. We are not merely sparks of this conflagration of the universal fire, as we used to be in our angelic condition; we are smoking, like damp fuel sunk in the flame of fire, and we have to pass through the three states of consciousness – waking, dream and sleep – which are absent in God. For the sake of the experience

of these three states, we have to manufacture within our own selves the instruments of these experiences, known as the five layers: the causal, the intellectual, the mental, the vital and the physical, in Sanskrit known as the *anandamaya kosha*, *vijnanamaya kosha*, *manomaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha* and *annamaya kosha*. We are encased in a fivefold coating, a dense covering of the little spark that is within us; putting on this fivefold spectacle of the *koshas*, we are looking at this creation of God. Therefore, it appears as if there are five things. We have five spectacles, and therefore, we see five things: earth, water, fire, air, ether. If we had one hundred spectacles, we would see one hundred things. Fortunately, we have only five. The one has been split, as it were, into the fivefold manifestation.

But God is calling every finite individual, as the father would like to have the prodigal son back. The rebellious son revolted against the father, ran away with all the little wealth that he could grab from the benevolent one who is the father, and became prodigal. The son may forget the father, but the father cannot forget the son. We are completely oblivious of the existence of God, the Supreme Father, but God is not oblivious of our existence. So God beckons every little finite unit back to Himself. "My son has gone away, and I am deeply grieved. When will he come back?" This, the father would have been thinking when the naughty one ran away due the height of his egoism. God is calling us back. This urge of evolution we think of in scientific language is God calling everyone back.

Everything is running in the direction of God, speeding with all velocity, right from the lowest to the highest. When God calls, who can resist this call? It is the centre of the universe calling everything on the periphery, described allegorically as the Rasa Lila in the Sri Bhagavada Purana – the Gopis dancing around Sri Krishna. The whole universe is restlessly moving around this central nucleus of the great Almighty. There is Rasa Lila going on everywhere in the universe. Sri Krishna is the proton, and the electrons are the Gopis, and every organisation that we set up in this world is a Rasa Lila that we are performing. There is a central chairman, a president, a king, an emperor, a monarch, whatever we call him. He is the nucleus and all others, the Gopis, are electrons going around him.

The necessity for setting up an organisation even at the atomic level is an expression of the need felt by the finite for the Infinite. All our activities, enterprises in society, are a blind groping in the dark in search of the great God whom we have lost. Blindly we are searching for God in the dark rooms of creation. In our hunger, in our thirst, in our sleep, in our fatigue, in our longings of a multitudinous variety in this world, in our births and deaths and transmigratory processes, we are asking for God. In the shops that we set up, in the travels that we undertake, in the learnings that we are imbibing in the colleges and the universities, in the cries and the sorrows and the joys and exuberations of life, we are asking for God. Everyone is restlessly dancing, crying, only for this central unit which has been severed, as it were, through

consciousness by a folly inexplicable to the human mind. This restlessness is expressed as action, karma.

How can you resist doing something? You say, “I will not do anything.” Who are you to say that? No one has the capacity, the strength or the permission to say, “I will not.” To bring back the analogy of the Bhagavadgita once again, if we are all Gopis, we are also all Arjunas. As Gopis we dance around the nucleus of the Absolute; as Arjunas we are sunk in sorrow: “Oh, I will not do anything. I throw down my bow and arrow of effort and hibernate in the region of non-action.”

“What a pity,” says Sri Krishna, the Guru, the Master, the superior, our guide. Nothing in the universe can resist the call of God, and action is the response of the finite in respect of this call.

When you know this fact that you are responding to the call of God in your activities in life, your activities become karma yoga. When you do not know why you are working in this world – when you are not aware that this activity of yours is only a response to the call of God – it looks like a drudgery, a bondage, a prison house, a jail into which you have been thrown. Then you curse life, curse samsara, curse everybody, curse the Creator, and nothing is good here.

But when enlightenment dawns, when you know the purpose and the meaning and the significance behind action, you would not dread death. There is no fear of becoming extinct. Neither you lose by death, nor you gain by living. There is neither gain nor loss in life. It is an impersonal adjustment of the finite with the Infinite.

This is action. It is impersonal because you are not doing it for your sake, or anybody's sake. It is a necessity under the circumstances of your present condition of finitude. A necessity cannot be called good or bad. It is neither pleasant nor unpleasant. It is a need; that is all. There the matter ends. When you say it is an inescapable necessity, you should not call it good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant. These ethical epitaphs do not apply to an impersonal urge which propels you to act in this world in one way or the other.

Therefore, karma yoga is impersonal action. It is not a personal duty that you do for your own self or for your family members. When you take care of your family, when the father protects the child or the son serves the father, when you owe an allegiance to any organisation, when you do a duty of any kind, you are again responding to this universal call from the humble position in which you are placed. And in the kingdom of God, there is no first and last, no superior and inferior; no action can be dubbed as good or bad, and no action can be called necessary or unnecessary because it is not connected to you as a finite individual. It is connected to the All-Being of the universe, of which you are an inextricable part. You are doing nothing. The whole creation is pulsating with action, and the pulsation of action which is throbbing forth from the heart of the universe is felt by every part thereof, which we all are. The whole cosmos is working for God-realisation, and the impact of this work of the universe is felt by every one of us, which is why we act willy-nilly.

As the wheels of a vehicle move, you too move because you are seated in it; therefore, you are not doing anything. You are not a *karta*. You are not an agent of action, and therefore, you cannot reap the fruit of that action. Therefore, action cannot bind you. Karma is not bondage: *na karma lipyate nare*. Man, why are you afraid of karma? It cannot bind you, it cannot cling to you, it cannot cleave to the individual. *Na karma lipyate*. Therefore, try to live long. What do you lose by living long? Why do you say, “Let me go early?” What do you gain by leaving this world early, by committing suicide? You will be reborn into another realm.

The procession of the evolutionary urge of the universe in the various stages of its manifestation is such that no one can escape passing through all the stages. So inviting death very early is not in any way a wisdom on the part of the individual, because life is not cut off by death. It is continued in the next formation of another type of finitude. Merely because you have severed your physical connections earlier by a foolish thinking and acting, you have not gained anything. Sometimes there can be a nemesis following actions performed foolishly. The body has to drop automatically, and not by force. As a ripe fruit is automatically, spontaneously severed from the stem to which it is clinging in the tree, and it is not proper or fair to pluck a raw fruit – that would be like peeling your own skin – so is the un wisdom involved in committing suicide or killing oneself, or killing anything for the matter of that, because life in a body, in a physical embodiment, is the force of the prana exerted upon this

vesture proportionate to the intensity of the desire which can and has to be expressed through this body only.

You have taken this body because of a particular desire which can be fulfilled only through this instrument, and no other instrument. You have not become a lion or a tiger or an angel. You have become this so-called person that you are. You are a man or a woman, poor or rich, whatever you are. When this particular desire has exhausted its momentum and it can have no purpose to serve through this body, it becomes a redundant old cloth, as it were, a shirt that you have to throw away. But as long as the momentum is there, it will be vitally connected to the body, and if you interfere with it when it is vitally so related to the body, you would be touching a live wire, and it will vehemently react, as electricity kicks when you touch a live wire. A sorrowful state of existence may be the nemesis that may follow from this act.

Well, now we come to the point of the great doctrine of karma which is hiddenly promulgated in this second verse of the Isavasya Upanishad, elaborated in the Bhagavadgita and all the doctrines of karma yoga. Life, as I repeated already, is a process of undergoing a training, as it were, in this field of education of the universe for the purpose of encountering the great Almighty, from Whom you have been severed at the time of the act of creation. Until you enter the Being of God, action will not cease, just as the river does not cease its roaring until it reaches the ocean. No urge can be resisted until you come face to face with the Almighty Himself.

Evam tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare. This law appertains to you in this condition of your existence. As you evolve higher and higher, the sense of finitude becomes less and less felt. Your dimension goes on increasing, becoming larger and larger as you ascend higher and higher in these stages of evolution. As I once told you, when you move from the base of a triangle towards the apex you are lessening the distance between the two sides of the triangle, the two sides of the triangle being the subject and the object. At the base they are quite apart, as if they are not connected with each other in any manner, but when you evolve further and further, when the synthesis between the seer and the seen is achieved in a larger and larger measure, the distance between the seer and the seen gets diminished until it is lost completely in the apex. At the point of the triangle where the two sides meet, the distance between the two sides is completely lost. The subject has become the object, and vice versa.

Until this stage of unity of the seer with the seen is achieved, so long as the finite has not entered the bosom of the Infinite, action cannot cease. Tvayi evam is an ordinance in respect of you in this condition. What is the ordinance? It is to say that you have to participate in the program of the universe. Participation is your duty; doing is not your duty. You do not do anything, because you cannot do anything. Why is it that you cannot do anything? Because you cannot exist any more outside the world to which you belong.

In one verse of the Bhagavadgita, in its eighteenth chapter, it tells us that several factors are involved in the production of the result of an action. That is the reason why many times we do not succeed in our attempts in life. “Oh, I have done so much effort; I have not succeeded,” is the complaint heard everywhere. You might have put forth all the effort, granted, but other factors might not have cooperated.

Adhiṣṭhānaṁ tathā kartā karaṇaṁ ca pṛthagvidham, vividhāś ca pṛthakceṣṭā daivaṁ caivātra pañcamam (Gita 18.14), says the Bhagavadgita. The structure of the individuality – the constitution of your personality – is *adhithana*. You are not as strong as an elephant, for instance. You can do a little work, but not so much as the elephant does.

The intensity or the understanding of the intellect is another factor which is called *karta*, the second factor. The strength of the instruments and the capacity of the instruments of the senses to perceive things properly is another factor: karaṇaṁ ca pṛthagvidham. Vividhāś ca pṛthakceṣṭā: The purpose for which you are engaging yourself in action, being multifarious, causes divided interest, and therefore, you are not wholly concentrated in any particular action. This is a fourth factor.

Lastly but not the least, and most important of all the factors, which decides the success of an action, is daivaṁ caivātra pañcamam: the extent to which you are in harmony with the will of the Creator. The percentage in which you are aligned to the cosmic will is also the percentage in which you will succeed in this world. If you

are in union or in harmony with the divine will in only one percentage, then your success will be one percent, not ninety-nine percent. Here is a great doctrine of God being the Supreme Actor and the individuals being only participators. Arjuna was not the real actor. Sri Krishna was the real actor, though he was only seated and apparently doing nothing. God only sits, as it were, in His cosmic throne. As I told you the other day, His existence is action.

God need not act with hands and feet, because He is above space and time, and He is the Supreme Actor. The sun does not act with hands and feet, and does not speak with a mouth, but his very existence is the activity of the universe. Every cell of your body operates because the sun shines in the sky. Likewise, the supreme enlightenment, the brilliance of God shining in the firmament of the supreme spiritual experience has such an impact upon every cellular embodiment in the form of individualities here that everything pulsates to its tune. This is again the Rasa Lila, the dancing to the tune of God, not dancing to the tune of the sense organs and the objects.

Inasmuch as you are not the real actor, for reasons already stated, and also inasmuch as you cannot cease from action, for reasons again already stated, karma cannot bind; and karma is not irreconcilable with knowledge. Knowledge is action, and action is knowledge in the case of God. His knowledge is action. His being and consciousness are identical with His creative activity. And to the extent you are able to participate in this unity

of knowledge and action which is the characteristic of God, to that extent you are a karma yogi in this world. Karma yoga is the union of knowledge and action. It is not knowledge alone, and it is not action alone; it is a blend of both, a necessity for which is again insisted upon in an enigmatic verse of the Isavasya Upanishad which comes later on: anyad evāhur vidyayā anyad āhur avidyayā, iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nas tad vicacakṣire (Isa 10).

I am not commenting on the Isavasya Upanishad here. Incidentally, I have taken this theme in the context of the explanation of the nature of the true religious life, which is the theme on which I am speaking.

The true religious life, therefore, is a life of aspiration for God; yes, but it is not non-action. It is not running away from things. Who can run away from the creation of God? Soar high and higher to the highest heaven, go deep and deeper into the furthest nether regions, but you are not outside the realm of God's creation. Therefore, how can you resist or escape from the impulse to action imparted to you by the creative will of God Himself?

Evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare, kurvann eveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet: Try to live in this world performing action – performing action not as an agent individually placed segregated from others, but participating. Parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha (Gita 3.11), says the Bhagavadgita: Action is a cooperative function; it is not an individual enterprise. When the Upanishads or the Bhagavadgita say that you have to engage yourself in action, it means cosmic action,

not your action or my action. And to make clear the fact that it is cosmic, this verse of the Bhagavadgita which I recited just now tells that cooperative interrelationship is involved in this action of karma yoga. It is a mutual alignment of individualities in a particular context or a society. When you are a member of a particular society, you work in alignment with the objectives of other members also, which again are totally aligned to the central objective of the organisation. Likewise, when I conduct myself, when I speak, when I think, when I do anything, I am in alignment with you in your thought, in your feeling, in your action, and every one of us is in alignment with the central objective of this organisation of the universe, of which God is the supreme ruler. In this sense, life is a yoga of action. And all life is yoga. Any kind of life is yoga. Any state of existence is a participation in this cosmic purpose. Therefore, life is yoga.

Life is yoga. It is not raja yoga, karma yoga, this yoga, that yoga, hatha yoga, kundalini yoga, and what not. It is a perpetual inward communion that every form of finitude establishes with the next higher stage of ascent. So every atom is performing yoga. Every cell of your body is in a state of yoga. It is crying for the Great Being. This cry of yourself for God is the action that you perform; therefore, karma is *sadhana*, not bondage. And karma is not merely action isolated from knowledge, it is being itself moving forward as becoming, the ocean itself surging forth towards its maker. Karma yoga is knowledge and action combined in a unique sense. It is

not a coming together of two different things. They are two faces of a single body. Knowledge and action are not two things, *A* and *B*, coming together, joining hands with each other – nothing of the kind. They are two aspects of a single effort, so that true yoga is not capable of being designated by any particular name. It is a total movement towards a total experience.

This mission of human life is, therefore, an acquiescence in God's calling, and the gospel of the Upanishads condensed in these two verses of the Isavasya is the gospel of man's movement to God. The first verse proclaimed the glory of the omnipresence of the Supreme Being. Inasmuch as the Almighty pervades the whole of creation, there is no possessor in this world, and there is no property. Greed is unthinkable. And in this divine atmosphere of the presence of God in all things, our duty is to participate in the work of creation, which is a movement to God. Today we may call it evolution, *sadhana*, yoga, or by any name we like.

Life is glorious. It is not a curse. We are not in a hell. We are in the kingdom of God, and God is calling us. And our great duty in life is to listen to this call in every minute movement of nature and every adventure in life, whatever be the form it may take. This is the way in which we respond to God. An awareness of this fact is yoga. Therefore, *īśāvāsyam idaṃ* is the theorem, and the corollary that follows from this theorem is *kurvaṇṇ eveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet*. In mathematics we have a theorem and a corollary. Some great doctrine is stated in the theorem and something follows from it automatically. The great

doctrine that is stated is that God is All-being, *īśāvāsyam idaṁ*; and the corollary that follows is that action is inescapable, action is not bondage, and we are not the performer of the action, we are only a participator in the great urge of the creation of God, the urge towards God-being.

Therefore, in karma yoga three points have to be remembered. The first is that we cannot escape from action. The second point is that we are not the doer of the action; we are only a participator. The third is that karma cannot bind, as we are usually told. Karma is inseparable from knowledge, and knowledge is inseparable from God's existence. Knowledge is *chaitanya*, *chit*, which is the essential nature of God, and that is inseparable from action. So action is, in a way, an expression of God Himself in the form of this creation, which is called *visargah* in the eighth chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

The whole universe is the action of God, and as you are involved in this action of God, you are involved perpetually in action, but whose action? In the action of God. So God acting is karma yoga, and you, too, are supposed to be performing this yoga when you are participating in this great action of God.

Chapter 10

THE TRUE MEANING OF RENUNCIATION IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

In our study of the essential message of the Isavasya Upanishad, we discovered the role of renunciation in religious life. This is a very important aspect of religious living, and its significance has been recognised in the practice of religion to such an extent that often it has been identified with religion itself. Religion goes as an equivalent to renunciation. The religious attitude gets identified with the spirit of the renunciate. The religious man is considered as an aesthetic, and the greater is this spirit of asceticism manifest in one's personal life, in the light of religion, the greater is the respect that he commands in society, which only explains the extent to which the world considers renunciation as the essence of religion. But while it is possible to regard renunciation as the essence of religion, it can also be easily misconstrued and get transformed into an irrelevant accretion in the true spirit of religion. Anything can be understood and also misunderstood.

There is a great reason why renunciation is regarded as a very important essential of religion. There is also a reason why it can easily get identified with religion itself entirely, thus missing the point in the great admonition. With all his logical acumen, man cannot escape the subtle feeling that the ideal of religion is a transcendent and otherworldly futurity in spite of an academic

acceptance of the omnipotence of God, or rather His omnipresence. Man is man, and he cannot be anything else.

The perception of the world as a transitory process – with which man’s mind comes into collision, as it were, every moment – and the impossibility to perceive the ideal that religion seeks both act as contraries in one’s life. A great hope is at the bottom of anyone taking to a religious life, a hope which passes ordinary understanding, a hope whose meaning may not be clear even to one’s own self. When you take to religion, you may not be clear as to what you are seeking, finally. It is an impulse, that is all, and there ends the matter. An impulse has no reason behind it. You are pushed onward in the direction of an overwhelming feeling going by the name of religion, and this feeling is constituted in such a way that it cannot easily get harmonised with what the eyes perceive in the form of a world of human beings, particularly.

The religious feeling is not always capable of getting clarified through human understanding and logic. Something tells you that God is not in this world, whatever philosophies may say, whatever anyone may proclaim. What tells you this peculiar thing? It is you yourself. Your involvement in the world is the factor that tells you that God is not in this world, and therefore, the world has to be renounced for the sake of the Realisation of God. How is it that this feeling arises in you? The perceiver of the world that you are gets involved in the world, and your perception of the world is the world

itself perceiving itself. It is the transitory process recognising its transitoriness. When any one of us looks at the world as a changeful phenomenon, we cannot see anything permanent here. We have already gone a little deep into this interesting feature of religion, namely, the permanent cannot be visualised in this impermanent process we call the world.

The great doctrine of the omnipresence of God does not in any way help us here because the doctrine remains as a doctrine, while the feeling continues to press itself forward as an intractable element in our life. We have never seen God, and we cannot see Him with our eyes, and the feeling insists that it is so. The feeling has a greater strength than understanding, sometimes, in the present predicament of man. We know very well how largely we are governed by feelings rather than by understanding. We suddenly go out of gear in our life by the rise of a strong feeling, which need not necessarily be commensurate with a logical understanding. We may be highly intellectual with an incisive understanding of the nature of things, but in our own house we are an embodiment of feelings, and the feeling is the root of individuality.

This mysterious eluding operation within our own psyche, whereby the feeling seems to be getting an upper hand over the understanding, is perhaps the reason why even great thinkers like Schopenhauer thought that understanding is only an offshoot of the will. They thought all that we call intellectuality is only a phenomenon, not so very strong as the will that is

behind, which can even be identified with the feeling of the individual. He became the founder of psychology with a metaphysical foundation of the West. It is an empirical outlook which gives rise to these conclusions, and our studies in libraries do not help us here because somehow or other, for reasons we cannot know, we seem to be governed by feelings rather than by logical understanding. We brush aside our intellect when feelings supervene. Feelings, emotions and impulses are almost one and the same thing.

So when we are fired up with a feeling of the religious ideal, we are prone to put down the understanding which might have been a brilliant torch before us in our academies, in our colleges and universities; we become heaps of feeling in a state of ebullition, and religion becomes a matter of feeling, rather than of understanding.

You must have heard it said again and again that religion is a matter of faith rather than of understanding, analysis, etc. And what does the feeling tell you? The feeling tells you that you are a finite individual involved in this process of a finite world. How can you recognise God in this world – a world which is fleeting, which is characterised by births and deaths of all finite entities, including our own selves? Therefore, God is not in this world. Hence, I have to renounce this world.

Here comes the masterstroke of the religious life: renounce the world. This dictum of the renunciation of the world wholesale, lock, stock and barrel, arises on account of the feeling, not the understanding, that we are

far from the Infinite. The world is far, far away from it. The Eternal cannot be seen in the impermanent world, and therefore, renunciation is the masterstroke that we have to deal at the root of this tree of life. And then religious men become hermits, monks, ascetics.

In this context we have listened to the message of the Isavasya Upanishad, which need not be repeated again. Bring back to your memories to what I mentioned in regard to the meaning that seems to be hidden in the first two verses of the Isavasya Upanishad. There is, akin to this spirit of religion, a famous saying in the Mahabharata: tyajed ekam kulasyārthe grāmasyārthe kulam tyajet, gramam janapadasyārthe ātmārthe pṛthivim tyajet (Mahabharata 2.55.10). Literally translated it means: For the sake of the family, the individual may have to be renounced; for the sake of the community, the family may have to be renounced; for the sake of the country, the community may have to be renounced; for the sake of the Self, the whole world may have to be renounced.

While the first phases are intelligible, the last one is a dangerous saying when it is not properly understood. For the sake of the Self, the whole world may have to be renounced. Man is more prone to misunderstanding than to understanding this because of his involvement once again in the finitude that he is, and what the world is. Very easily he can misconstrue great statements of scriptures. “For the sake of the Self, the world can be renounced. Oh yes, now I understand what religion is.” He leaves the home, leaves the family, leaves

relationships, cuts off connections, lives in a cave, for the sake of the realisation of the Self that is within, for the sake of the salvation of my Self, the soul. Ātmārthe pṛthivim tyajet. It is said for the sake of the Self or the soul, the world may have to be renounced. And what is this soul; what is this Self? Empirical-ridden man, overpowered by feeling and capable of seeing only his body and the world, cannot understand by the word 'Atman' more than a light which seems to be flickering within his own physical body, for the salvation of which he has to renounce the whole world.

This, though it is not the real meaning of religious asceticism, may be the form which it sometimes takes, to the woe of the religious man himself. Religion prescribes renunciation, and for the sake of the Self, for the liberation of the spirit, the world may have to be renounced. But, as I mentioned to you, here is the danger in understanding this injunction.

This verse that I quoted from the Mahabharata may itself serve as an explanation of the true meaning of renunciation in the interest of the salvation of the Self. If you had listened to me when I gave the translation of this verse, you would have noticed that the great teacher who made this statement had in his mind a gradual enlargement of the scope of your personality, in the interest of which the lower dimensions are expected to be renounced. An individual is a dimension, but the family is a larger dimension. He said the renunciation of the individual in the interest of the family is to be understood in its proper spirit, not merely in its letter.

The family is not a group of people, and similar is everything that is said afterwards – the community, the world, etc. When we speak of the family or the nation, we are not speaking of a group of people. The nation is not a heap of people. Likewise, the family is not a group of individuals. It is a qualitative transfiguration of a value that is usually attached to the individual. Your personality, your individuality, is a qualitative something, rather than a quantitative six-foot body. You know very well you are Mr. so-and-so, and you are likely to think during unguarded moments that you are only this body. This is a quantitative assessment of your personality: I am six foot, five-and-a-half foot, etc. But you know very well that you are not to be measured by a foot ruler or a yardstick. Yourself as a human being cannot be measured by a rod of metre, a yardstick. You are not an arithmetical or a geometrical physical appearance. You know that you have a quality, a status, a something. There is something in you; or rather, you may be said to be a something not easily capable of getting identified with this six-foot body. Sometimes, when you are angry, you say, “What do you think I am?” This statement is not made by the body. It is not the body saying this. Somebody else speaks from within you.

There is a status within you which cannot be translated into any other word. There is a position that you occupy, some importance. Don't you feel that you have some importance? This importance is not the importance of the body. After all, what is the importance of the body? It has no more importance than what can be

attributed to other bodies. But certain people feel that they are more important than others. Don't you think it is so? Where comes the greater importance of one individual than the others while all look alike in the light of their geometrical figure or the length and breadth, etc., of their bodies? It is a quality which speaks in the language of an importance, a status.

This quality gets enhanced when you identify yourself with a family, so there is a self in family. This is why you have so much affection for family members. The affection, love, etc., that you evince to the members of a family to which you belong is not a love that you show to the bodies of people. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why you should be attracted to these bodies at all. What is there in these people? Why do you say this is my brother, this is my mother, this is my father? Let it be. Even if they are, why are you clinging to them? This clinging arises on account of a peculiar subtle quality that pervades among the members, a quality that is already within you which has only extended its dimension. This quality, when it extends itself, cannot be identified with a group of bodies; therefore, the family is not a heap of individual units but a qualitative enhancement of an imperceptible cohesive force, which also explains what a nation is, what humanity is.

So when it is said that one individual can be abandoned in the light of a family, and a family can be abandoned for the sake of a nation and the world, etc., you have to understand what the meaning is. It does not mean that you can bid goodbye to the members of your

family and say, “I go, and I shall not have anything to do with you in future.” You are not bidding goodbye to the family members when you renounce the family. This is a very subtle matter which, if it is missed, religious spirit is also missed at the same time, and your renunciation becomes a hoax.

This injunction is purely spiritual and not social. When you are told that an individual may have to be abandoned for the sake of the family, and the family for the sake of the nation, and the world for the sake of the Self, what are you to understand from this instruction? It is not a social isolation of your individuality or the family group from the larger group called the nation or the humanity or the world. It is nothing of the kind. Religion is not a social affair. It is spiritual in essence, so you cannot associate religious practice with any kind of social adjustment, and even your social dissociation from your family members need not be identified with any step you have taken in the direction of religion. That is a very important matter to remember.

When you have withdrawn yourself from the family for the sake of religion – withdrawn yourself from the whole humanity itself, rather – what you have done is, you have taken a further step in advance in a qualitative way, not in a social way. Socially, well, you have already told people, “I shall not have anything to do with you, and I shall not speak to you from tomorrow. I have become an ascetic. I am a monk.” This is not religion.

The religious meaning of this renunciation comes into relief only when you have qualitatively risen have

above the total of humanity, not before that. Do you think that you are beyond the total of humanity in your spirit? Then you have gone beyond humanity, and you can renounce the whole world for the sake of the Self.

Which Self? Here comes a very important question which has to be answered with great caution. Myself? I wish to attain salvation? This misconstruing of the meaning behind this injunction that for the sake of the Self the world may have to be renounced has also engendered certain doubts in the minds of people: "What happens to my people when I attain salvation? It is a pity that I go to God leaving all my family members and brethren here in the dust of the Earth." This doubt can enter into even a highly evolved person, not only ordinary people. A great genius in thinking also can entertain this doubt: What happens to the world when I reach God? Sometimes the doubt can take such an atrocious form that it can tell you, "You are a selfish man. You are trying to reach the feet of God while the world is suffering." This misconstruing is common, and you cannot easily get over this difficulty because you cannot get over the difficulty of feeling that you are, after all, a human being. You are one Mr. among many others, and whatever be the renunciation you have taken to, you are just one boy, son of a father, a little daughter, a sister or a brother. After all, you are that only; you are nothing more than that. Whatever be your spirit of renunciation, you have not really taken one step in the direction of religion if this doubt can arise in your mind. You are hopelessly unfit for religious life if these doubts can arise

in your mind, because these doubts arise on account of your involvement in the world as a finite entity among many other finite entities, and your feeling that renunciation of the family or humanity is just socially cutting oneself off from outward relationship with people. But that is not the meaning of the spirit of this teaching.

‘For the sake of the Self’ does not mean yourself or myself because in this sloka, in this verse, you would have observed there is a gradual ascent of the increase in the dimension of the point you have to reach in your renunciation of the lower categories. The family is a larger dimension than the individual, the nation is bigger than the community, etc., the world is bigger than the nation, and therefore, the Self should be bigger than the whole of humanity. But do you think your Self is larger than humanity? You feel very small: “Humanity is so large, and I am a very small individual. How can I be larger?” But in the logic of the ascent that is prescribed in this verse, the Self has to be larger than the world; otherwise, what is the point in renouncing the world? Do you renounce a larger thing for the sake of a smaller thing? How foolish should you be?

The logic of this ascent which takes you to larger and larger dimensions from individuality to family, family to nation, etc., takes you to a still larger thing called the Self – a Self which is larger than the whole universe itself. For the sake of that universal Self, you may renounce the whole humanity, but not until that realisation comes, not until that feeling arises, not until you understand the

meaning. Otherwise, you will be a very, very foolish person to think that you have renounced family, humanity, nation and all that, and you have nothing to do with anybody.

Very careful you have to be when you think that you are a religious man. Don't be foolish; don't be hasty. The mind can trick you in one second and put you down on a lower pedestal. Though you may have thought you have renounced your family and have nothing to do with your parents, etc., what have you renounced? You have only cut off a social connection; but religion is not social. Again to repeat the very, very important aspect of religion: Religion is the rise of the spiritual character of your personality by degrees; it is not a social association or a dissociation. Until this spirit has been understood, religion has not been understood.

Now we come to renunciation, the point where we began. What is religious renunciation or asceticism – putting on a cloth, entering a church, a chapel, a temple, a cave? Nothing of the kind is religion. Renunciation is the rising into a higher category of quality, and thereby automatically the lower category is renounced. The larger includes the lower, and therefore, it is absorbed in the characteristics of the higher. Hence, the lower is spontaneously renounced. The world is smaller than the Self. The Self is not smaller than the universe. But when you look at yourself, you may look very small.

Religion cannot be seen with the eyes. You can see only people and the world. Religion is a spirit that you entertain in your consciousness, and not something

which you see with the eyes or grasp with your hands. This spirit of religion will explain the spirit of renunciation. Hence, when the spirit is absent, when you stick to the letter and not to the spirit, the letter can kill and the spirit may be completely lost sight of.

There is a graduated ascent in everything – in everything in the world, in any matter, in any occupation and in any enterprise. Therefore, religion has to be practiced gradually by slow detachment. There is a famous verse in the Yoga Vasishtha which tells us that in the beginning you should not, and you cannot, give the whole of your time to God. Rather, you cannot give even the whole of your mind to God, why to speak of time? So Vasishtha, the great master of the Yoga Vasishtha, says in his own language that in the earlier stages, you may be able to give only one-sixteenth part of your mind to God, and at that time, when you are in that position, in that capacity, you cannot and you should not try to give the whole of your mind and time to God. Gradually the quantity should increase, and the quality also should increase. The quantity should increase only when the quantity increases, not before. You can give one-eighth, one-twelfth or one-fifteenth to God only when you know the relationship that obtains between you and God.

We regard God also as a social individual mostly. In the religious prayers that we offer, even in our religious outlook, for the matter of that, we cannot help regarding God as one person among many persons, maybe a large person, maybe larger than anybody else. The social instinct does not leave us even when we go to heaven. It

pursues us wherever we go. So in our conception of God, the social impulse catches hold of us and transforms the concept of God into a social individual. He is a large Father in heaven, a Brahma or a Vishnu or a Siva, and whatever the reason may say about this omnipresence and inclusiveness, as I told you, the feeling says that there is something left unsaid in this matter.

Hence, the immense duration of time that you may take in leading a spiritual life. It is not a matter of one day or two days, and there is no harm in taking time. You will not be a loser here because a right step and a correct step, perfect step, even if it is only one step, is much better than a hundred steps wrongly taken which may have to be retraced afterwards because of a miscalculation done earlier.

Now, what I have told you today is a continuation, as it were, of the meaning that we could discover in the first two verses of the Isavasya Upanishad where God's immanence was proclaimed and the necessity on the part of man to engage himself in unselfish activity also was enunciated. The human individual cannot escape action. Karma yoga in its seed form was declared in the verse of the Isavasya Upanishad perhaps many years before the Bhagavadgita was written.

Hence, renunciation is an essence, and an essential part of religious living, because detachment or non-attachment is considered as a vital part of the religious life. But we have taken time today to consider what this detachment is and ought to be. In what sense are we to become ascetics and renunciates? When we take to

religion for the sake of God we are entering into larger inclusiveness, and therefore, the lower isolatedness gets automatically renounced.

You have not renounced anything actually when you take to the practice of the presence of God. You have gained more things, rather than lost anything. It is like losing a disease for the sake of health. When you become healthy you have lost a disease no doubt, but you do not say you have renounced disease. This will be a meaningless statement because disease is not a natural condition of the body. It is an unnatural state of affairs into which the body has entered, in which it has got involved. Ill health and health are not two different things. You cannot keep health here in one balance and ill health in another balance. They are both inside the body, conditions of the very constituents of the body. Likewise, renunciation and spiritual living are conditions of your personality. They are not things: here is renunciation, here is religion, here is meditation, here is God, here is the world. God and the world, renunciation and spirituality, are conditions rather than things; therefore, they cannot be isolated.

Hence, you cannot renounce the world physically or even socially for the sake of a God who is in your mind, just as you cannot throw off disease and keep it somewhere in a corner for the sake of a health that you have attained. When you have become healthy, you cannot see the disease at all. It is not somewhere sitting in a corner, gazing at you with a spirit of vengeance.

In the same way as ill health is not to be seen and even conceived when you regain health, when you reach a larger dimension of the spirit, the lower one will vanish like the illness which has infested your personality in the various degrees through which it has to pass. The world will look like a disease in the end, and here you must know what the world is. Again to repeat, it is a condition of your experience, and not a substance that you are touching with your hands and feet.

These are hard things for the brain to grasp, and much time is needed to contemplate all these details. Busybodies that we are, we will find little time to think in these lines. Religion is not an easy matter. God is not a cheap stuff that you can purchase for three paise. Great sacrifice is necessary – great sacrifice not of a thing or a substance, but of a prejudice. We have obsessions and prejudices in our mind. They are hard to renounce. You may renounce your father and mother, but you cannot renounce your prejudice. You cannot easily give up your inborn traits, though you may give up things in the name of renunciation.

Religion and spirituality are hard things for a mind which is obsessed with social thinking, and physical and economic and material evaluations; therefore, a great training is necessary under a competent master so that the true meaning of religious living may be imbibed by us in our holy adventure.

Chapter 11

THE IMPORTANCE OF HOLY RITUAL

A common feature among all the religions is the performance of ritual, which is observable everywhere. The life of man is inseparably connected with various types of ritualistic observances. Even those academic type of intelligentsia who imagine that ritual is outmoded and unnecessary are involved in different types of ritual. A performance of any kind can be regarded as a ritual. It is a general term signifying any kind of outward expression of an inward feeling. Any gesture is a ritual, and whether it is performed within a temple or outside in the street, the ritual remains the same. When you bow down your head before a holy altar, you are performing a ritual, and when you greet your friend and shake hands with him in the marketplace, you are performing another ritual. Any kind of gesture expressing your internal feelings, for the matter of that, can be regarded as a ritual. And who is free from it?

But from the point of view of religion proper, ritual is the homage which the finite man pays to the incomprehensibility of the Infinite. We cannot help offering our obeisance in all ways, with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, to that mighty invisible presence, and this humble gesture of ours is the holy ritual that we perform. We cannot help feeling a need for this performance on our part because our entanglement in finitude is so profound, and consequently the

Almighty Being seems to be so far away from us. As a result, we cannot help expressing our littleness before this greatness in a humble gesture of obeisance, which in a traditional epigram in India goes by the name of *sashtanga namaskara* – prostration with eight parts of the body operating together. Many of us may not be aware of what this *sashtanga namaskara* means. *Ashta* means eight, *anga* means limb, and *ashtanga* is eight-limbed prostration. You fall flat on the ground with your arms joined together, palms coming together, the whole body prostrate on the ground as a symbol of utter surrender and submission, a gesture of total annihilation of oneself, a surrender which is complete in every way before the great power – primarily the Supreme Being, and secondarily any great towering personality such as your Guru or the deity whom you worship as a symbol before which, and before whom, you express your surrender. When everything fails, surrender takes its place.

Very often we have been told that the finale of religion is self-surrender. The religious life culminates in the surrender of the self to God, which inward sanctified feeling is expressed in worships of various kinds, and entertaining conceptions of various kinds of symbols in the performance of this worship. As the body is supported by the legs, religion can be said to stand on ritual feet. Ritual is not an essential part of religion, in the same way as legs are not an essential part of the body; but ritual is an essential part of religion, even as the legs are an essential part of the body. How they are essential and

how they are not essential will be clear to you by this homely analogy of the feet on which the body is supported and planted. Who can say they are unimportant, though you may feel that they are not important.

In Indian theological tradition there is a graduated system of the practice of religious worship, designated as *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*. These terms are very reputed and known in circles of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy and practice, but these correspond almost to what is generally known as karma, bhakti, yoga and jnana, only mentioned in a different system of terms: *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga*, *jnana*.

A humble service which may take the form of very concrete acts either in a temple or in the form of a service of the Guru is *charya*. You might have seen a swami in the temple who goes to the jungle, plucks bael leaves, collects flowers from the garden, brings tulsi leaves, sweeps the veranda – the outskirts of the temple – keeps the precincts of the shrine very clean. This is *charya* that he is performing. The outward form of the service of the great deity of worship is *charya*.

But you must have seen one or two persons inside the temple. They do not sweep outside, or go to the jungle and collect leaves, etc. They are concerned with the inner apartment, the holy of holies. They also do a little bit of cleaning, but that is an inner service which consists of such acts as keeping the idols and images very clean, dressing them, decorating them, and helping the worshipper with lighting the lamps and such other

things, which is part of what is known as *kriya*. It is a service to the great deity internally related to the shrine, and may be considered as a little superior, and even the actual worship performed by the central figure in the holy of holies is a part of *kriya* only. I believe this system continues even in Roman Catholic churches. You will find it in the Gurudwaras of the Sikhs, and in the temples of Zen, in Buddhist and Jain circles. I don't think it is absent anywhere in any form of religious service.

The worship that the swami or the chief priest performs inside the holy of holies with his assistant is the *kriya* that is performed. The *charya* and the *kriya* are the outward forms of worship. They are the external shape ritual takes. The external ritual consists in the feeling that the body and the limbs of the body are essential in the performance of worship. You have to be seated physically in a posture, or you have to be moving in a particular manner. You have to be doing something with your hands and even chanting something with your mouth, with your lips, with your tongue, so that the organs of the body are an essential necessity in the ritual which goes by the name of *charya* and *kriya*.

But ritual need not necessarily be connected with the physical body. It can be purely a mental act. Worship in a highly ritualistic and complicated way can be performed even in the mind. Mentally you may go to the jungle and collect *bael* leaves without moving one inch from your seat. Mentally you clean the precincts of the temple; mentally you do *charya* and *kriya*. Even the waving of the

holy lamp and all the minutiae of the worship are carried on inwardly in contemplation. This is yoga.

There were four great representatives of this type of performance of religious worship in the field of religious adoration of God known as Saivism, especially in Southern India. These great stalwarts known to us today in these circles are recorded in a book written by Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj called *Sixty-three Nyanar Saints*. Of these sixty-three, or we may say sixty-four, adding one more who is not included in this traditional list, there are four stalwarts who are regarded as representatives of these four aspects mentioned – *charya, kriya, yoga* and *jnana*: Appar, Sundarar, Jnanasambandar and Manickavachagar. These names may be difficult to pronounce yet they are well known, and I mentioned them as specific examples who devoted themselves wholly and entirely, with all their soul, to the performance of divine worship in these ways.

The tradition of ritual in religion has a great inner meaning. It is not a meaningless performance on the part of a devotee. Yesterday I pointed out a peculiar feature that predominates in the human individual: the sense of finitude. We cannot help feeling that we are small, whatever be our learning. Who can help having this feeling in the presence of this mighty Creator of the universe? And you know very well in our daily life we are almost slaves to rituals of various types. Who can gainsay that we can live without gestures of some kind? We do not live like stone statues without movement. Every minute of our daily life is a series, as it were, of symbol,

gestures which are rituals of some sort or the other. These gestures, when they are directed to God, go usually by the name of religious ritual. Otherwise, they are secular gestures.

This brings us to a corresponding important point in the practice of religion, namely, worship of a symbol. God cannot be conceived except through some symbol, and we are not in such an elevated mood of the spirit as to be free from this necessity of conceiving God as some symbol or the other. Even the most far-fetched imagination of our reason can catch hold of only some symbol of God, not God as He is, or the thing as it is in itself. Even our idea of universality and omnipresence is a symbol that the mind is catching hold of. What is meant by omnipresence? It has no sense for the human mind. We have only to imagine certain events that occur in this world, certain forms which are visible to the eyes, and certain conceptions that are possible for us. Beyond that, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience mean nothing to us. They are symbols, and man is not merely a luminous reason; he is also a deep emotion.

We have noted yesterday the role of emotion and feeling in man, which brings to highlight the spirit of submission to which one resorts in one's obeisance offered to God. The most predominant and prominent way in which God is envisaged by the human mind is of a great emperor, a ruler supreme, a sovereign of the universe. God is defined as the sovereign of the whole creation, and you know what your feelings are towards a sovereign. Awe, wonder, fear, affection – all these

sentiments come together in the presence of a Supreme Sovereign.

The worships in the temples, especially as prevalent in India, are carried on in a way similar to the entertainment of a great king. The deity in a temple is a king, and this king has to be entertained in a royal fashion. You know how you would entertain an emperor if he were to come to your humble cottage. You can imagine what your feelings would be if you were to receive a notice today that the emperor, the king of your country, will pay a visit to your cottage after a month. What those feelings would be, each of you would know for yourself. "The king of the land is coming to my cottage after one month." For a whole month you will be thinking this. For a whole month you would be making all sorts of preparations, everything conceivable to the mind – neatness, cleanliness, decoration, festoons, beauty, and anything that would please this mighty sovereign.

That is the worship offered in temples. The great God is received as a most honourable guest; and in India especially, there is a great detail involved in the receiving of a guest. It is not just shaking hands: "How do you do? Please sit down." This is not the way of receiving such a mighty guest. It is a great ritual, it is a great performance, it is an occasion for uncontrollable emotion of joy. People many times weep, cry when the great man comes. They cannot speak a word. The throat is choked. Even the words, "How do you do? Please be seated," will not

come from the throat. No words will come because of the exuberance of joy that the great being has come.

In the Mahabharata we have this instance mentioned of Lord Krishna coming to the humble cottage of Vidura. He was given the information: tomorrow the great Lord Krishna is coming to dine with you. Oh, the man's heart burst. That he was alive was a great wonder, and he forgot himself completely. When Sri Krishna entered the cottage, he was beside himself, and he had no awareness that he was existing at all. He was no more Vidura, the host. He was nothing at all; he had vanished completely into thin air.

When the joy becomes maximum, it can inundate your personality to such an extent that your whole body and mind will melt. Such a spirit of inward inundation and joy is also the divine feeling of the worshipper in a holy temple, which can be seen in temples like Tirupati, and such great shrines in southern India particularly, which are able to maintain this ancient tradition even to this day, to a larger extent than in northern India. The rituals are observed with a greater detail and devotion and scientific punctiliousness in southern shrines than here in the north. If you want to see this detail you must go to the Meenakshi temple in Madurai, or the Tirupati temple. Oh, it is wonderful! You will be simply shocked at the earnestness and the sincerity and the sense of holiness that is surrounding the performers of the worship, and the realistic feeling of the presence of God in that symbol, the idol, the image of Venkaswara or Meenakshi, or whoever the deity be. There is no symbol

there. It is not an idol, it is not an image; it is God speaking. There were devotees who could dance to the tunes of Bharatanatyam or any other dance before the Mighty Being which, to the untrained eye, is only a stone image.

It is difficult to perform a ritual unless you are a heightened religious devotee. A person who sees only material things cannot be a devotee of this type. A temple is a representation of the universe. It is not a building of brick and mortar. The structure, the pattern, the arrangement and the layout of the temple is comparable to the Viratswarupa, or the Cosmic Form of God. This is the tantra or the *agamic* system of laying out a temple; and *agama* rituals are a very, very essential part of the religious system prevalent in India.

You will be in a state of horripilation and thrill if you are to go deep into these techniques of the construction of a temple. It is not just that thousands of bricks are purchased and some mason builds anything he likes. It is a systematic portrayal of the very structure of the cosmos conceived as the Virat Purusha, the Being that animates the whole creation. You would have seen in temples such as Rameshwaram, etc., and other great shrines, that the layout is specifically characterised by certain details. In most of the temples you would have seen a huge pillar, sometimes with a flag on it, and nobody would know what this is. That is what you see at the outskirts of the temple where grossly conceived sacrifices are performed. To recall to our minds the meaning of sacrifice once again, it is the essence of religion and spirituality.

Sacrifice precedes your eligibility to enter into the holy shrine and have a vision, the darshan of the great deity. That particular altar at the gateway symbolises the place where the animal in you is sacrificed. Many people offer actual animals there – cut the goat or the buffalo. That is a crude outward form that ritual may take to signify an inward necessity which is the sacrifice of the animal in man before he becomes truly human in order to gain entry into the divine that is in the holy of holies.

Many of the temples have five corridors, or sometimes seven, representing the inward layers of the body – the five *koshas* or the seven layers of consciousness. You know what the five *koshas* are: the *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya*, *anandamaya* *koshas* – the physical, vital, mental, intellectual, causal. Or sometimes there are seven, as I told you, instead of five, representing the seven ascents or the stages of rising above gradually from the material to the deeply religious, holy, divine, spiritual. And you have to cross these gates one after the other, five or seven, and enter the dark holy of holies where a limpid lamp is burning lonely and solely in itself, illuminating the deity with its little brilliance.

In the traditional temples, the holy of holies is not bright with sunlight, and there are not many air vents. Mostly they are dark. You have to simply rub your eyes to see what is inside. It is purposely kept dark, not because the temple builders were primitive, ignorant of ventilation methods. There were very wise people, and they symbolised in this darkness the *anandamaya kosha*,

the inward holy of holies where everything is dark to the senses. God is born in midnight, whether He is Krishna or Christ, when everything is pitch dark to the senses which can see things only in the daylight of the sun. God is born when the senses are asleep. That is the midnight of the senses. In this darkness of the *anandamaya kosha* where the senses, the mind and the ego are all asleep and nothing is there, there is this little Atman twinkling in this holy of holies, call it the *anandamaya kosha* of your own individual personality, or the great Ishwara of the cosmic causal condition. The temple represents both the microcosm and the macrocosm.

Thus is the symbol of the temple, and the whole process of worship is a large symbol of a graduated surrender of personality and a symbol of a whole-souled placement of the divine in one's own self. If any one of you is conversant with the way in which *puja* or worship is performed in a temple or even in one's own house, you would have seen that the performer chants some mantras, touches certain parts of the body – the head and the eyes and the ears and the nose and the chest – while saying something which you will not be able to understand. These are called *nyasas*. *Anganyasa*, *karannyasa*, etc., are the words used. Modern youth do not know all these things. They are too sophisticated, and religion is regarded as primitive. This is very unfortunate.

These are *nyasas*. The word *nyasa* in Sanskrit means placement, placing. You place the limbs of the divinity in the corresponding limbs of your own body. That is *nyasa*, done through the hands and through the limbs of

the body. When this placement is done through the hands it is called *karanyasa* – *kara* is hand, *nyasa* is placement. When it is done through the limbs of the body, it is *anganyasa*. *Anga* is limb, and *nyasa* is placement. The particular chants or the mantras recited during this ritual of the placement of the divine in one's own personality mean that every part of your body is tuned up to every part of the divinity, correspondingly. The microcosm becomes en rapport with the macrocosm, and vice versa. The head of the Virat, the head of God, the head of the Great Being, your deity, is your head. Your head becomes united with the head of the deity so that you think as the deity thinks, and the deity thinks as you think. There are no two thinkings. Thus, His eyes are your eyes, your eyes are His eyes, your nose His nose, your ears, your chest, your hands, your fingers, are His, so that God has entered you and you have entered God.

If you have done this ritual properly, not in a hurry but with a deep feeling and understanding of its meaning and the processes involved there, you will be in a state of thrill. You will weep silently at this time. You will weep silently knowing the glory of God. You will weep over the joy that God has entered you. It is not a *puja* that you are doing in a temple. You are encountering your great Maker. What can be a greater achievement and a greater benefactory blessing upon you than this? You can imagine what it means. The Great Being's head is united with your head. The Great Being is united with you. The whole cosmos has entered you. The universe is pulsating

through your veins and through every cell of your body. And when the *charya* and *kriya* have risen up to yoga, when the whole activity is purely mental, you enter into deep meditation of the union of the microcosmic with the macrocosmic, and then it is that anything can happen to you. What is it? What do you mean by anything can happen to you? You may lose your self-consciousness.

Sincere worshippers like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, to cite only a recent example, were in ecstasy when they worshipped deities such as Kali. Dance is the form that worship may take to the tune of the music and the chant of the mantras in the holy worships performed in the temples. You may become unconscious. In a state of super-conscious involvement, it may look that you are unconscious. The body may not stand this entry of a superpower.

Ritual, *karma kanda* as it is usually known in religious circles, is the gateway to the portals of religious practice. There are many details of this performance of worship. Sixteen processes of worship are mentioned – *shodasa upachara*, as they are called. You invite the guest, and entertain the guest in sixteen ways. You sing his glory: “Great one, I am so happy that you have condescended to pay a visit to my humble cottage.” Don’t you think these are the words that you speak when a great one comes to your house? “How happy I am that after days of longing to see you, you have shown this mercy to me by coming to my humble residence.” You give him holy water. You yourself wash his feet, such is your love, such is your devotion. You put a soft cushion.

“Please be seated.” You yourself pat with your own hands the soft cushion that is neatly arranged. “Please be seated.” You take the great person by the hand and seat him. And if the one who has come to you is superbly great, inconceivably superior to you, you may not be able to say anything at that time.

Then the ritual starts, and all the offerings that you are capable of conceiving in your mind are offered to this great deity. There is no need to go into these minor details. You can know it from other sources. It is a grand thing to make the guest seated and then see that he is entertained thoroughly to his utter satisfaction until he gets up and bids goodbye and departs.

This process of the entertainment of a great emperor, the king of the universe, is the performance in the great temples of worship. On a smaller scale these worships are performed by people in their own houses also, with a little corner kept as a sanctified place for worship of their own little deity. Though the process of worship in one’s own house is also similar to the worships performed in temples, in temples it takes a large gorgeous form, like processions etc. If you have witnessed any, you will be surprised to see it, especially in southern India, to repeat once again. You will not see much of it in the north.

So today I was thinking of placing before you these little ideas that occurred to me concerning the importance of holy ritual as a part of religious adoration of God, and you should not be under the impression that you are too big, and beyond the ritualistic level. Not so is the truth; the lower you are, the better for you. It is a

great virtue for everyone to realise one's own position and not overestimate oneself unnecessarily as a *jnani* or a yogi. Each one should know what one is, and this recognition of one's own real position is itself a part of the worship.

Chapter 12

THE SIMPLICITY BORN OF UTTER GOODNESS

It would be good to bring your minds back once again to all I told you in order that the significance of this instruction gets related to your practical day-to-day life. There is no use of listening to instructions and going through studies if the instruction or the study has not entered the blood and flows through the veins and become part and parcel of your physical and psychic personality.

It is our attempt to live life properly, not to study much. All study, whatever be its extent, is a gathering of knowledge which has to be set into action in the environment of our life. In a large sense, this is the meaning of meditation. In a specific sense, it means the art of living. The way in which we have to live in this world successfully is itself meditation, though this name need not be associated with a perfect life.

The life that we are required to live in this world can be impersonally designated as a life of perfection, not a life of religion and spirituality or godliness, names which need not be associated with the task on hand inasmuch as they are oftentimes associated with preconceived notions.

Our minds are made in such a way that prejudices die hard. Whatever be our research in the line of religion, philosophy and psychology, the mind will have to say something after everything has been said because of the

feeble impact that the studies could make upon our personality. We remain the same persons with years of study and any amount of learning, like a rock into which water cannot penetrate even if it is inside the Ganga for years together. Hardboiled is human individuality. Flint-like is the ego of man, and it cannot melt with any instruction and any amount of learning. All learning remains finally like a bathing of granite, over which water flows and yet not a drop enters.

This happens because of a notion we have about our own selves, consequently a notion that we have of ourselves and others, and finally a notion that we have about life as a whole. We are born with a particular outlook of things, and we oftentimes die with the very same outlook. It does not change.

Hence, a learning of the art of living requires a deconditioning of the mind. This is the reason why we seek sequestered places, come to the Himalayas or to any ashram: to decondition the mind. It has been conditioned into a particular way of thinking and living under a given atmosphere. The deconditioning of the mind is not possible unless we are put in quarantine, into a camp which is away from that atmosphere which has been responsible for influencing us in that particular way. When we go home and live in the midst of our family or parents, suddenly our mind changes its way of thinking. All our certificates of Oxford or Cambridge mean nothing there in the family where we are once again a small boy or girl; the same thought continues

there with the same old rut of thinking, and our certificate remains a piece of paper with no meaning.

We are here for a serious purpose and not to waste our time, because we have not plenty of time to squander. “Life is short, art is long,” is an old saying. There is no end for knowledge. *Ananta-shastram bahu veditavyam alpashcha kao bahavashcha vighnah, yatsarabhutam tadupositavyam hamso yatha kshiramivambumishram* is an old Sanskrit saying. *Ananta-shastram*: The learning is so vast, like the sky. We cannot comprehend it with all our might and main. *Bahu veditavyam*: So much is there to learn that our life is not enough. *Alpashcha kala*: The time at our disposal is very little. *Bahavashca vighnah*: Many obstacles come in the way even in this little period of time, the span of life that has been allotted to us. Therefore, the second half of the verse gives the advice. *Yatsarabhutam tadupositavyam*: Abandoning the chaff, extract only the essence, as we are told that a swan can distinguish water and milk even if they are mixed together. The milk of life, the essence of knowledge, has to be extracted from the chaff of every type of information that is available in different places in the world.

The test of the progress that you make in the art of living is the amount of satisfaction and freedom from tension that you feel in your own life. It is no use saying, “I have learned so much; I have this degree and that title.” You have to set it aside as meaningless, finally. With yourself as a judge of your own personality, by silently contemplating your own self, you can gauge your

own depths and measure the extent of the progress you have made by your own feelings about yourself, and also about other people around you.

When you look around like this, what do you think in your mind? This will tell you what you are. A type of diary may have to be maintained to undertake a psychological check-up of one's own self. You have to be very strict with yourself, though you may be lenient with others. You should not be lenient with yourself and hard upon others. A strict disciplinary checking up of one's own psyche and its functions is essential, and a specimen of this methodology of self-checking going by the name of a spiritual diary has been given in the prescription of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj: "How many times did I get irritated; how many times did I resent something?" and many other questions of this kind are put to one's own self.

For how many minutes of the day were you able to entertain the idea of the goal of life? For how many minutes, I have to say, because it is impossible to have this type of consciousness for hours. The hours of the day are spent in nonsensical thinking, which has absolutely no connection with our welfare. This is our fate because of the way in which our brains and minds are conditioned. We are the same old donkeys that we were when we born, and we have not become horses in a moment's transformation. All great achievement in life has been the effect of hard labour on the part of the seekers in any field of work – scientific, biological, chemical or philosophical.

The little pinpricks of our day-to-day existence and the mutual action and reaction psychologically created among ourselves in social life form part and parcel of the observations we have to make in the leading of the life perfect. What we call life spiritual is the life perfect. A complete life is called spiritual life. It is not a monastic life, or a life in a cathedral. Again I come to the point of deconditioning our minds. We have been conditioned into a way of thinking the moment the words 'God', 'religion', 'spirituality' are uttered. We cannot escape this predicament of getting compelled to think only in one way the moment we think of the words 'religion', 'spirituality', 'divinity'. These words immediately create in our minds a sense of alienation from things in the world and an artificiality of living, a complex of self-centeredness in the name of a religiosity or a Godward movement of ourselves. We may hear sermons from saints and sages to any extent throughout our life; they will not create any impact in the mind if an inward desire is absent to lead this life.

Most people are driven to a life of religion and spirituality by a defeat that they have suffered in life. This is unfortunate. It is not a coward that can go to God. Only a hero who has won victory in the battle of life can reach Him. In this tremendous warfare of conflict with the forces of nature and the ups and downs of social living in this battle, in this tug of war, you are going to be the winner and not a defeatist. A person who is defeated here will be defeated hereafter also. It is not a question of changing of place and circumstance; it is a quality of

attitude that matters. Each one of you will know whether you have been defeated in this world, whether things are too much for you and you cannot face them any more, and then you turn to God, religion, monastery, church. If this is, and this has been, the cause behind your movement towards religion and spirituality, you will get nothing from them; you will go a bankrupt. Only a rich person can renounce. A poor person cannot renounce anything because the poor man has nothing. What will he renounce? A beggar cannot renounce, because he has nothing.

The spirit of renunciation becomes meaningful only when you have, and yet you do not want what you have. Renunciation is not the outcome of the feeling that, "I do not have anything and, therefore, I am an automatic renunciate." You have all the things. Everything conceivable, glorious, beautiful, worthwhile, pleasant is under your command and you can get it if you want, and perhaps already it is with you; yet, you have no interest in them because of a higher light that has entered you. That the Godward ascent is a positive movement and not a negative defeatism is symbolically given to us in an instruction of the Taittiriya Upanishad where the gradations of joy are described. "Only a king can become a sannyasin," used to be the saying of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Unless you were a king in the previous birth, you cannot be a real sannyasin in this birth. The idea of renunciation arises in your mind because you have seen the world through and through and enjoyed it a hundred percent, not because you could

not get it. Otherwise, you will be reborn as a *seth's* son with all the amenities that are necessary materially.

The Taittiriya Upanishad tells us something very interesting which should make our hair stand on end. Imagine that there is a ruler of the whole Earth, a king, an emperor. In the history of humanity there has never been an emperor of the whole Earth. Such a person never existed, and perhaps it is difficult to imagine such a person. But for the time being, imagine that such a person exists. The whole world is under his control. He is an emperor, a ruler of the whole Earth. Very young, highly educated, very healthy, learned to the core, and the whole world is under his control. What will be his happiness? None in the world can ever imagine what it can be, because nobody has been in that condition. All these qualifications cannot be found in one person – very young, healthy, educated, cultured, without any form of disease, and the whole world under his control. Such a person never was, but if it were possible to have such a person, what would be the joy? He would burst with joy; that is all. That is the positivity of happiness that man can conceive in this world. But this is only a one-hundredth drop, says the Taittiriya Upanishad. This great joy that you are imagining in your mind as the emperor of the whole world is a drop, a hundredth part, as it were, of the great joy that reigns supreme in the higher realm which is of the Gandharvas. These are names which may have no meaning. We may say they are angels in the second realm, or the state of being that is just above this physical level.

To imagine what these levels are, we have to bring our mind to the point of concentration upon the layers of our own personality. There is the physical, the vital, the mental, the intellectual, and the causal sheaths, one inside the other – one inside the other not in the sense of physically one being one inside the other, but as gradations of intensity of subtlety. So when we say there are higher realms, we mean the same thing as when we say there are layers inside our personality. They are realms inside the cosmos. They are not spatially high, even as the layers inside are not spatially inside but only logically inside. The Gandharvas are angels, divine beings, celestials who cannot be seen with the eyes, as electrons cannot be seen with the naked eyes but they exist inside the physical world. Their joy is one hundred times more than the joy of this great man about whom we have been speaking thus.

Only a person who has seen the light of this joy that is above can renounce this world; and the Upanishad tells us this great joy, which is a hundred times larger than the joy of the great emperor of the world, is also a drop, as it were, compared to a still higher joy of the gods in heaven. The gods in heaven, therefore, have a joy a hundred multiplied by a hundred of this emperor of this Earth whom we have not seen with our eyes, whom we are only imagining.

One hundred times the joy of these celestials is the joy of the ruler of the gods, Indra. We cannot imagine what it is. Our mind will cease to think here. One hundred times the joy of Indra is the joy of Brihaspati,

the preceptor of the gods. One hundred times the joy of Brihaspati is the joy of Virat, the Cosmic Being in its physical manifestation. One hundred times the joy of Virat is the joy of Hiranyagarbha, still higher. We do not know what we are speaking; these are only words for us. One hundred times the joy of Hiranyagarbha is the joy of Ishwara, and countless incalculable non-mathematical, super-logical – you cannot say a hundred times more, further – is the joy of the Absolute. This you are aspiring for. And you can imagine what you are; it is this you are longing for. The brain will cease to function, the mind cannot think it any more, the mouth will speak no words, and you would not know where you are sitting if these ideas are to occur to your mind constantly, day in and day out.

What is the state in which we are living here seated in this hall compared to these tremendous envisagements ahead of us, which actually are what constitute the essence in our spiritual path? The great stages of meditation mentioned in the various systems of yoga are the risings of the consciousness to these levels of bliss. So when you check up your own mind every day and make an assessment of your own selves, you will know where you stand. Have you gone to that level of inner satisfaction which can be associated with the king of the whole world? Or do you feel like helpless nothings, useless nobodies?

I mentioned to you some days back that you cannot renounce the world unless you have become greater than the world. Do you feel that you are greater than the

world, any one of you? If this confidence has arisen in your mind; if this confidence has come to you for any reason whatsoever that you are greater than this world; if you feel reasonably so, with some substantiality behind this feeling – for this important reason, I am superior to the world of contents – if this conviction arises, true *vairagya* has arisen. I am repeating what I told you some days back. If you feel that you are only a small boy in this large world of terrible people, then the world cannot be renounced and even the next step cannot be taken. Even the second step in spirituality, religion, Godward movement, is not possible, what to talk of the higher ones?

The second step, the immediately superior one, is that which transcends this physical Earth, which goes beyond the joy of the whole emperor of the world; and if you have seen through the joy of this type of person, you have passed through the world and known every bit of it, and cannot be faced any more with the logic of the world, or if you cannot be shaken by any word that anyone utters, then perhaps you have the strength to enter into the next realm.

The Godward movement, the movement towards perfection, freedom from thralldom, liberation of the spirit, is a positive movement from one degree of perfection to another degree. There is no loss in any stage of achievement. There is only gain in every stage. The spiritual asceticism or the religious renunciation is not a giving up and a loss. It is a gaining of more and more substance. Thus, when you have renounced the world,

you have not lost the world. You have got something which is bigger than the world. It is like gaining one million dollars by losing one dollar. Because the one is included in the one million, you have not lost anything. Everything has come back. All that you have apparently lost has been included in what you have gained.

The moodiness, the dejection, the melancholy mood, and the sense of defeatism, worry and tension in our minds in our religious life are unfortunate consequences which should tell us that we are not leading a religious life, or even a good life. We have been thoroughly defeated by our own minds. Hence it is that anything puts us out of order and makes us become irate. The amount of calmness that is in our mind, the extent of positivity that reigns in our mind, the quantum of goodness that we can see in the world rather than the evil in things, is a test of our advance in the life spiritual.

There is no such thing as a spiritual life isolated from the life of the world. Again, this point has to be remembered. Many times we speak like children and think like children when we say that we are after this or after that. It is not the truth. We are not after any particular thing in the world. We are after a wholeness which is the health of our being connected with the health of the human society and the world as a whole.

No amount of repetition of this truth that the word 'spirituality' connotes an inclusiveness rather than an exclusiveness would enable the mind to free itself from the old prejudice that, after all, the one thing is different from the other. The good life and the godly life are one

and the same thing. To the extent you are godly, to that extent you are also good. You cannot be humanitarian, charitable, sympathetic, affectionate or good unless one modicum of godliness has entered you. Only God can be good. That is why the great philosopher Plato defined God as the Idea of the Good, because only God can be good and nobody else can be good. Sun is the supreme source of light, and everything is sympathetically brilliant. Likewise, we are sympathetically or conditionally good to the extent we are able to participate in the Idea of the Good; all other ideas are subsequent and subsidiary.

Many of us, perhaps all of us, are not even on the first step of yoga. We are unnecessarily imagining that we are very great persons. We are very poor fellows, really speaking, though with a genuine feeling to be good and do something good. Granting that this sincerity is already in us, still we are wriggling and writhing on the lowest pedestal of social living. What we see around us is a society of people, and not anything divine. That is not seen in this world. Where is divinity in this world? Can you show me which place it is? We see only people, human beings. We do not even see the whole world with our eyes. We see only human beings like us.

Even in this conditioned form of involvement in the thought of the world as outside us, we are further conditioned by the thought that only human beings exist in this world. Our state is really a pitiable one. We are thinking only of human beings; we cannot think anything else. People, people, people, friends, enemies,

men and women – all thought is of humanity only. Even the thought of the world as a whole, as it is in itself, does not occur to our minds. We are utterly pitiable fellows. The idea of the world itself has not arisen in our minds when we think of human and humanitarian values and not world values. The idea of a value of the world has not come to us yet, because the world contains more than human beings, as everyone knows. Perhaps, things which are not human are more important than the human, as you would learn when you go deep into the matter. Things which you are not thinking in your mind, and which are not human, condition even human life; and very, very foolishly we think that life is only humanity, people, and there is nothing else. So even in this world itself we are in a very low state, what to talk of Gandharvas and angels and Indra and Brihaspati. This is tall talk. We may take thousands of births to reach these stages.

Hence, humility is the hallmark of the spiritual seeker. Don't say, "I am seeing lights, I am shaking, and there is warmth in the spine." Don't speak all this nonsense. There is nothing of the kind. This is only a kind of hypnotism that you are introducing into yourself. You are yet to learn the art of humility before the majesty of the universe and the greatness of God. The more you learn of grandeur of creation, the less you feel the importance of your own self. Here begins religion, here begins spirituality. And, as I told you, the life spiritual or the life religious is a practical way of conducting oneself in this world, and all your learning and listening and

studying is an aid in the implementing of this learning in your day-to-day living.

What is your reaction to human society? What is your reaction to the world as a whole? This is the thing that is to be assessed first and foremost. A hater of the world is not a religious man, nor is a person who is attached to the world. It is an impersonal outlook of a large friendliness, the great *maitri* which Buddhism speaks of, a friendliness which is equanimous and which does not see evil and ugliness in things. The non-adjustable feature of our personality is the first thing that has to attract our attention. The great canons of ethics, known as the *yamas* in the system of Patanjali's yoga, are the prescriptions for bringing about a harmony between ourselves and human society.

When you cannot adjust yourself with anybody in this world, you are not even in the first step of yoga. You are a peculiar person. How is it that you cannot adapt and adjust yourself with anything and anybody? You quarrel with every person. There are people who are quarrelsome in their nature. In the office, in the family, in the shop, in the marketplace, in the railway station – everywhere they quarrel. Every word is a word of resentment and not of acceptance. And while many of us may not be so bad to this extent, this trait is present in every one of us in some percentage. We are not incapable of quarrelling. We are not incapable of going out of balance in our minds and becoming irascible.

The potential for retaliation in respect of the objects of the world is itself to be plucked out from the root. It is

not enough if you are consciously good. Even subconsciously you have to be good. Many of us are consciously good. We are not quarrelling here. But we are capable of quarrelling under given circumstances. That capability itself should be removed. The disease has to go from the roots. Under no circumstance can you come in collision with others. It is just an impossible thing for you to collide. Such is the harmony that has to be established within in the deeper layers of our personality. This is real harmony, and a conscious effort to adjust oneself with great difficulty with other people is not enough.

Many of us adjust ourselves with great difficulty, as we cannot help it. But the adjustment has to be spontaneous. You are not putting forth a hard effort at adjusting yourself with people. It has become so natural that you are like a child, adjustable with anything. As the great Acharya Sankara says in one of his great verses: With an old man, he is an old man. With a child, he is like a child. With a sick man, he is like a sick man. With a young man, he is like a young man. With a wise man, he is a wise man, and with a foolish man, he is a foolish man. You have no personality of your own. That is simplicity born of utter goodness, which again is a result of an abolition of your egoism totally, by which you become one with things. Then the world is your friend. Then you have no fear.

Now we are afraid of even the wisp of the movement of the wind. A little straw that rustles can frighten us. The world is an enemy; people are opposed. Therefore, you

are afraid. But when you are a sincere, genuine well-wisher of all people and bestowing benediction on all creation inwardly from the bottom of your heart, the world will protect you. You do not require army and police. You will be protected by the forces which are around you, provided you are their friends. They are your friends even now, but you do not speak to them. You are very busy. Your mind is turned otherwise. Yoga is a movement in the direction of the natural forces which take you by the hand higher and higher to the diviner realms.

Thus, coming to the point once again, before we withdraw ourselves into an inward contemplation or a meditative policy, we have to be socially good and harmonised and aligned in our personality. We should not go inward to meditation with an inimical feeling towards others. Make friendship with your neighbour first, said Christ, before you turn to God. You should not have an inimical neighbour. Make peace with the world first, and then only you can make peace with God. If the world is your enemy, God cannot be your friend. This is a hard thing for us. The world is still an enemy. We have many things which we do not like, and not liking is another name for inimical attitude to things. Is there anything which you do not like? Make a note of it in your diary. Make a list of all the things that you do not like, and give reasons as to why you do not like them. If you are unable to find an answer to these queries, go to your Guru: "These are the things I do not like." Why is it you do not like a thing which others may like? A thing which

you do not like may be the object of liking for another. How is it that the same thing is liked by one and disliked by another?

Hence, a policy of an inward subconscious acceptance of true friendliness is the beginning of yoga. Yoga is not a religion. It is the way in which you have to live in this world. It is union with the littlest atom of creation, with the most insignificant things in the world. With those things you have to set yourself in union. That is yoga. It is not necessarily union with the Absolute; it is union with a cup of tea, it is union with a banana that you eat, it is union with the most insignificant, silly things of the world – meaningless things, as it were, which no one considers. With those little insignificant nothings we are in harmony. Thus, every cell and every atom of the world is in unison with us. We become world personalities – citizens not of India or of any particular nationality. We are citizens of God's creation.

Nature is our friend. This is the first step that we take in our onward movement, or we may call it an inward movement, or a movement in all directions. The step in yoga that we take is at once outward, inward, and multi-dimensional. From the universal we have come down to this particular personality of ours in the process of creation, evolution. From this individuality of ours we have moved outward into an externalised form of relationship called society. Now the yoga practice is a reverse process of movement inwardly, in a very technical sense. It is not a physical inwardness that we are attempting. It is an inwardness of consciousness,

which is not a spatial or temporal inwardness. As we have come down from the all-pervading universal to the particular, and from the particular we have gone outward into the human society in space and time in the downward movement of creation, in the same way in the upward movement we retrace our steps from the outward involvements in the particular things of the world into the inward contemplation which usually goes by the name of meditation.

Thus, in the meditational technique, in the art of inwardisation of mind and consciousness, we withdraw the consciousness from its attachment to the particulars. We do not physically withdraw from spatial contact with things. A meditational technique is a consciousness technique. It is a work of consciousness, and not physical or spatial in any sense. It has nothing to do with our physical location. It is an inward transvaluation and transfiguration of our conscious attitude. The whole world is consciousness finally, ultimately, as the end result. The objects so-called, the people we see around, are configurations of consciousness. They are gold shining as dross. A condensed form of light becomes matter. Modern physics says the same thing: Light can condense, become hard, solidified into the substances that we see as the things of the world. Energy can become matter, matter can become energy; light can become substance and substance can be converted into light. Consciousness has become the whole world. These people seated here and these walls and the buildings are consciousness condensed, particularised, localised,

pinpointed in space and in time. So they have to be decomposed into their generality in the process of meditation. The ice has to melt into the generalised water of the cosmos. The hardboiled individualities of things outside, the objects in the world, and our own selves all have to melt in the menstruum of the originality of consciousness.

Here we come to the inner depths of religious practice and yoga. All yoga is meditation, finally. Religion and spirituality is meditation. Any successful endeavour in life is a meditation. The whole life is meditation. The Earth itself is meditating, as it were, says the Chhandogya Upanishad. The entire enterprise of life is summed up in one word: meditation. And meditation is the art of success – success in any field. In your profession, in your teaching line, in your professorship, in your business, in your family life, in your dealing with anything and anyone in any manner whatsoever in the world, there will be success.

Success is sure, says the last verse of the Bhagavadgita. Success is certain. Where is it certain? It is certain where the two join together. In the language of this verse of the Bhagavadgita, it is where Krishna and Arjuna are seated in one chariot. The individual and the universe melt into each other as rivers enter the ocean. We are able to think as nature thinks, not as X, Y, Z thinks or A, B, C thinks. Meditation is the way in which we think in consonance with the way in which nature thinks, or God Himself is thinking.

The gradational ascent of consciousness in its attempt to think in alignment with the way in which nature thinks or God thinks is the series of steps in the practice of yoga. These are the meditations, about which I shall tell you something in the coming few days.

Chapter 13

THE SUPER-PHYSICAL UNION OF YOGA

As a science of life, yoga goes deep into the ultimate reality of things and is not satisfied with the surface view of the world to which we are usually accustomed. Thus, yoga is a very serious matter, the final step that a person takes in life, being bent upon the solution of the great problem of existence which harassed the minds of persons like Buddha, and to enable people to tread which path incarnations like Christ were born into this world. Messengers from the Eternal descend as incarnations – sages and saints and masters and adepts – to help mortal individuals rise to the peaks of achievement towards which all life is moving. Hence, that all life is yoga is well said.

All life is yoga, any kind of life is yoga, anything that you do is yoga, whatever you think is yoga, whatever you speak is yoga – provided that what you think and what you feel and what you act and how you behave and conduct yourself is a continuous adjustment of your being with the requisition of that great yoga which is the universe contemplating itself. What is yoga? Yoga is the universe contemplating itself. It is not your thinking of somebody, not A, B, C or X, Y, Z meditating on some God outside; it is the whole creation becoming aware that it is. That is yoga. It is in this sense we can say that every life is yoga, provided that it becomes a conscious affair.

Unconsciously everyone is a part of this vast universe, but consciously we have to be such a part.

Hence, yoga is a rousing of this unconscious relationship to a conscious experience. Unconsciously we are no doubt in perpetual unison with the whole of the universe; no one can gainsay this, but this has to become a conscious affair. Unconsciously you may be the son of a millionaire, but thereby you regard yourself in no way better. When you become conscious that you are the heir apparent of a millionaire, you become wealthy. It is consciousness that matters, not the thing as such. The thing may be there, or may not be there; your awareness of it is what really matters.

Yesterday I told you that the whole world is consciousness. As the Upanishad says, *sarvam khalv idam brahma* (Chh.U. 3.14.3): The whole universe is the Absolute scintillating in various forms. And as the Madhyamika Buddhism puts it, the whole universe is a void. Void of what? Void of forms and names, particularisations and sensations of every type. Nagarjuna, the great thinker of the Madhyamika School, declared that the whole of reality can be summed up in one word: nothingness. It is a nothingness of everything that is perceptible to the senses. Everything that is cognisable by the empirical mind and recognisable by the empirical senses, all this is a nihil, a zero; it is not there. It is a phantasm, but you think it is a hard, diamond-like, flint-like reality because you yourself, as a perceiving individual of the same, are a part of this phantasmagoria. It is like blind men being led by the blind.

Thus, there is no chance of our recognising the phantasmal character of things. We cannot know it as long as we are involved in it. When we have joined a band of thieves, we have to behave like thieves. We cannot behave like policemen at that time because we are part of this band. Thus, we have become part and parcel of this band of sensory experience. The world that we experience is nothing but a bundle of sensations. The world is not a solid object. It is a heap of sensations, vibrations, actions and reactions. This is what the great Buddha was not tired of telling again and again in all his sermons: Transitoriness is the nature of this world.

It is not that the world is transitory, but the world is transitoriness itself. It is not that a bird is flying; there is only flying without a bird – something very difficult to understand. Many of the disciples of the Buddha could not grasp what he meant. The meaning was that there is no solidity, substantiality, perceptibility, tangibility, etc., in the objects of the world, including our own body. The substantiality, the hardness, the solidity, the thisness or thatness of things is an electrical repulsion brought about by a coming together of two electromagnetic impulses from our fingers and from the structure of that particular thing we call matter or objects.

People who have had the experience of an electric shock, of a high voltage particularly, would have known what one feels at that time. If you touch a live wire of 250 volts – not a higher one, of course – you will not know what is happening. There will be a peculiar sensation of a tremendous weight, as if a hill is tied to your hand. A

large weight is hanging on your arms. It will actually feel as though somebody is pulling you down with tons of weight, while there is no weight, really speaking, and nothing in your hand. A mere electrical contact, a repulsion created by the velocity of the electric force, can create a sensation of an iron hill hanging on your hand.

Why go so far? You have a solid, tangible experience of substantial centres of pleasure and pain in the dream world, which you cannot deny at the time of experience. Oftentimes we get awakened to a real perception of this world by a shocking experience in dream, like a roar of a tiger or a fall from a tree, and the like. Unreal things can create real experiences. You can have a real waking from sleep by an unreal roar of a tiger in dream. Very strange indeed! How can an unreal cause produce a real effect? This happens.

Thus, a complete revaluation of values precedes entry into the path of yoga. Great masters who are leaders par excellence, like the Buddha and the Christ I mentioned, cannot be regarded as ordinary religious men. They do not belong to any religion because they were percipients of reality. And while we are told that yoga is union, actually what is intended to be conveyed by this instruction is that the basic reality in you comes in union with the basic reality of things. In one language it is called samadhi or *samapatti*; in another language it is called union with reality. It is called God-realisation, cosmic experience or cosmic consciousness, freedom from birth and death, attainment of immortality, and other names you can conceive in your mind.

Our structural pattern of personality has got involved in a mire of externality to such an extent that we would find it hard to enter into the technique of the inwardisation of consciousness. You have heard it said that meditation is an internal affair and when you hear that you have to inwardise your consciousness and centralise your being within in meditation, you may be under the impression that you have to close your eyes and look inside your chest or contemplate something within your physical heart, the inwardisation getting identified with a centralisation within this physical body.

This inwardisation referred to in yogic meditations is not of this kind. It is not a physiological, spatial or physical entry into your body. You are not withdrawing the mind from an outside something into an inside something, attempting to place the mind inside the physical body. This inwardness or *pratyaksha chaitanyata* of consciousness is hard for us to imagine in our minds because we are like the prisoners in the den which Plato describes in his Republic – looking at the shadows and beholding their movements on a dark wall, getting identified with the shadows themselves, and not knowing that we have an archetypal or original existence. Thus involved in the perception of shadows, unsubstantial movements, we would not be able to imagine even in our minds what it is to inwardise consciousness.

Consciousness is the seer, the knower, the pure subject. As a pure subject, it cannot become an object of cognition or awareness. Thus, when you transfer the

logic of this subjectivity of consciousness to your earlier conclusion that the whole world is consciousness, you can know where you stand at this moment. Stretch your imagination a little bit with effort. What do you feel at this moment? In this pure, non-objective or purely subjective consciousness which is the substance of all things in the universe, what is your location? Where do you stand?

This establishment of yourself is yoga. There the mind does not oscillate, does not flicker, does not move to any object outside because it is just not there. Things which are apparently hard melt into this liquidity of consciousness, into which you too liquefy yourself, to put it into intelligible language – liquefy in the sense that the location of your presence enters into the locations of all things. As all rivers enter into every other river in the ocean and every river is everywhere, all things are everywhere, and you too will find yourself everywhere.

This happens merely because of one important fact that your essentiality as pure consciousness recognises itself as present in all other things also equally, due to the fact that the whole world is scintillating consciousness, the *alaya vijñana*, the repository of universal awareness. It is not a particular person's awareness, yours or mine. It is thus not an inwardisation of your particular awareness into your physical inwardness, but an inwardness of what metaphysically may be called subjectivity proper. It is a metaphysical subjectivity, not a physical subjectivity of bodily inwardness. *Yato yato niścarati manaś cañcalam asthiram, tatas tato niyamyaitad ātmany eva vaśaṁ nayet*

(Gita 6.26) says the Bhagavadgita: As the mind moves hither and thither in meditation in search of its food, from there, from that particular corner into which it is moving, draw it inwardly into the selfhood of itself. This is your effort in yoga.

We are living in an unreal world in one important sense. We are living in a world of shadows. These people moving in front of us are the shadows cast by originals which we cannot see because we have been chained in one direction only, as Plato puts it in his great description. Our necks and bodies are chained tightly in one particular direction towards the dark wall upon which we see the movement of the shadows cast by the originals of people moving in the sunlight behind us, but we cannot turn our neck and see behind us because we have been chained tightly.

The space and the time complex are the chains which tie us forcefully in the direction of the shadows, the movements. They are called shadows because they are merely movements of another thing altogether, which cannot be seen with the eyes. We may call it the world of three dimensions, or the world of shadows; we may say it is a world of movements, transitoriness, a world of flux, as Buddha said or Heraclitus said, or anyone might say in his own language.

The problem is that we ourselves are involved in this flux. Therefore, we cannot see it is there. Whatever be the sermon that we hear regarding the flux and the transitoriness and the shadowy nature and the non-externality of things, all these sermons and lectures and

teachings go over our heads. Nothing will enter our vitals because we are involved in this very flux we are supposed to cognise.

Thus, yoga is difficult, like climbing on one's own shoulders. Hard is this because it is necessary to achieve an almost impossible task of standing aside, away from or apart from the whole flux of nature including the flux of your own bodily individuality so that the meditator, the yogin, the seeker, the spiritual aspirant, is not inside your body. It is not you that is meditating. The you or the I have gone here. Gate gate paragate parasamgate is a great mantra of Buddhist Mahayana by which they proclaim the reaching of the other shore by this involved consciousness. Mani padme hum. All these mantras of Buddhism imply the entry of the jewel of your essentiality into the lotus of universality. This is mani padme hum, and this is this parasamgate, the entering or the reaching of the other shore of consciousness of the Madhyamikas, of the Yogacharas, and of even the Vedanta philosopher.

So the meditating consciousness is not yourself. You yourself as a boy or a girl or a man or a woman or an individual of this type are not the meditating centre. You have already got out of this flux, so you are visualising the whole world as an object in front of you, as a movement and not a substance. The world is not a substance. It is merely a movement. This is what they mean by saying it is a shadow. This can be recognised only if you can perform this almost impossible feat of

getting out of your body yourself. You have to stand outside your own body.

There is a very beautiful sutra of Patanjali where he gives a hint at this possibility of our standing outside our body and looking at our own body. When you are able to see your own body as any other object, you are really meditating. Otherwise, you are only imagining that you are meditating, and you are regarding this part of the flux as a reality and considering other aspects of it only as a flux.

There is a very simple, unrecognised sutra of Patanjali, but very important for the purpose of meditation, where he uses the word *mahavideha* (Y.S. 3.43). Many teachers do not even recognise the existence of this sutra because they cannot understand what it actually means. Meditation is a *mahavideha* condition of the mind, says Patanjali. He does not explain by way of a commentary; a simple word is used. A great disembodied state of the mind is called meditation. By 'disembodied condition of the mind in meditation' he means the getting the mind out of the involvement in this body and feeling its presence equally in other bodies. This *alaya vijnana*, the cosmic awareness, this great mind that thinks the whole world, the God-mind if you would like to call it so, is what really meditates, and not your mind or my mind. The meditating mind is a divine mind, and to enter into this purely meditating divine mind, you have to find an exit from this body.

I am seated here, and each one feels I am here. This little five feet or six feet length of myself is here. My mind

is inside this body. My mind cannot be outside my body. This is what we, each one of us, thinks. Now in this *mahavideha* meditation, in the attempt at getting out of this body, what are you supposed to do? Do you know? Strongly feel that you are inside the body of another object. I am inside the tree, not inside this body. I am the tree itself seeing this person seated here. It is not this person seeing the tree, but the tree seeing this person. And you have gone there, entered into that object. This is a system of telepathic communication also; telecommunication, telekinesis, and such other things which you must have heard of are techniques of a simple transference of your mind to that which you expect to think in a particular manner, do something in a particular way, behave in a particular manner, etc.

This technique can be adopted in regard to any object in the world. You can think as another person thinks. For this purpose you have to transfer your mind to the personality of another individual and assume the countenance of that individual in every respect, to every minute detail. Right from the top of the head to the tip of the toe you are that person, not this person. That person is seeing this person; the mind has gone out of this body. This can be applied in respect of anything, or to all things at the same time. This is a far more advanced system of meditation where you can feel your presence not merely in one particular thing to which you have transferred yourself, but in all things in which your basic mind is present – not the empirical mind, but the archetypal mind, the original mind, the *alaya vijñana*, the supreme

consciousness. Then you will see the world as an object in front of you, and you too will be an object as a part and parcel of this vast universal thing.

So in this meditation, it is not any particular person that meditates because this person so-called that is yourself or myself goes with the objectivity of things in space and time. You get out of this objectivity of space and time and you will find, if you are sincere, if you are honest, if you are sure that your technique is correct and you are hundred percent hopeful that success must come – not ‘may’ come, but has to come – you will see the world dancing to your tunes. There is no doubt in this. You will not be a servant of the world; the world will become your servant. The dog does not go with the tail. The tail goes with the dog. This is a conviction that has to arise in your mind. You should not go like a doubting Thomas. “Oh God, if there is a God, please help me.” This should not be your prayer. “If it is possible, let me try.” Then nothing will come. Why should it not be possible?

“If it had been possible for a Buddha, if it was possible for Christ, if it was possible for this person and that person, why should it not be possible for me? Certainly it is possible for me. And it is not only possible for me, but I am meant only for that, and I have no other function to perform in this world. Every other so-called duty, performance of mine in this world is a contributory link to this development of my personality toward this central achievement of the cosmos.” This conviction itself is a meditation.

Jijñāsur api yogasya śabdabrahmātivartate (Gita 6.44). Even this conviction itself takes you above all the scriptures. The Bible and the Vedas are no more necessary for you when this conviction enters into you whole-souled. It is in this condition that great saints like Mira began to dance in ecstasy. They were not mad people. They were not crazy persons. They were in the height of immense sanity. The joy that took possession of them was such that they could not control themselves. Every cell began to dance in ecstasy, so the whole body danced. Tukaram, Namdev, Ekanath, Mirabhai, Surdas, Tulsidas – they looked like madmen because they were dancing in superb ecstasy of an uncontrollable possession, which state they achieve on account of this conviction.

‘Conviction’ is a poor word. We have no word for this in language; it is not conviction, but something more than conviction. It is not cocksureness, but something more than that. It is impossible to describe. Achintyam avyaktum, says the Upanishad. Such certainty takes possession of you that the world is with you like a huge army behind an emperor, and you have greater joy than that so-called king whom I described to you yesterday as the possessor of the whole world. You are not an emperor only of this Earth, of the realms to come, with a free access to all the worlds. Tasya sarveṣu lokeṣu kāmācāro bhavati (Chh.Up. 8.4.3), says the Upanishad. A free access, a permanent passport, as it were, for entry into every realm is granted to you by this indubitable

certainty that has entered into you by a correct understanding of the principles of yoga practice.

A large amount of time has to be spent in this practice. The whole of your life may have to be devoted for this purpose. Yoga is not an experiment, it is not a vocation, it is not a profession, it is not a religion, it is not a faith, it is not a creed, it is not a party to which you belong. It is your dedication. It is your envisagement of the meaning of the whole of life. It is your perception of the reality of things. Then it is that you can smile at the whole of life. You will smile at anything that you see. You will smile at all the events of your life and all things that you see with your eyes as beauties, rather than as forms of ugliness. They are an incandescent form of the glory of the Almighty. Whether God smiles or frowns, it makes no difference to Him. As the cub of a tiger or a lion is not afraid of its own mother and can jump on the mother's face, scratch her nose, bite her ears with impunity, with no fear, you can ride on this lion of the world. It can do no harm to you. You need not be afraid of anybody.

It is not for nothing that we are told in the stories and histories of great saints that God acted as their servant, unthinkable as it may appear. Satan tempted Christ, "If you are the son of God, convert these stones into bread. Why do you starve?"

"It is not that I cannot convert stone into bread, but it is written that you should not test or experiment with God," said great Christ. "You cannot test God. Do you think I cannot free myself from this cup that I have to drink? The great Father will unleash the whole army of

angels at my simple request. Why should Peter raise his sword? Get thee back, Satan,” said Christ. “At a mere humble request of mine, my great Father can unleash the whole army of angels. But I want it not at this moment.”

The army of Narayana, Rudra or Brahma will be at your beck and call. The great *sudarsanchakra*, says the Bhagavata, was hurled spontaneously, as it were, even by the very feeling of a great saint. When God is willing to be your servant, as it were, *yogakṣemaṁ vahāmy aham* (Gita 9.22), what about this world, what about this nature? What is this universe? Why are you afraid of it? Be bold. As I told you, only if you are convinced that you are greater than the world can you renounce the world. If you are a poor mouse or a little cat that is silently crawling in a corner of the world, helplessly driven by forces of karma, yoga is not for you. If you are a bold, heroic, adventurous spirit in this path of God, relentlessly taking to this great goal, all the angels will be at your beck and call. The whole army will be behind you, as Christ put it.

As the Yoga Vasishtha tells in a famous verse, the angels of all the heavens and realms will be at your service. They will consider it as their duty to protect you, safeguard you and provide you with your needs, provided you have abolished your ego, you have entered into the cells and hearts and the substances of all things. Why do the angels serve you? Because you have entered them. They love you as they love themselves. They are not loving you, protecting you, helping you. They feel as if they are protecting themselves. This is why the world is

at your beck and call. God bestows upon you the abundance that He is because of your entry into the substances of things, which was the great vision of the Buddha when he recognised the transitoriness of things and had a vision of nirvana, which was the originality behind the shadow performances.

So my dear friends, do not be under the impression that you are having some three-month course of lessons. You are on an adventure. We are only here to speak to you in a friendly manner, not as great masters, not as Incarnations which we are not, but as co-pilgrims on the path who speak the same language and feel the same feeling on this great journey to the supreme achievement. These few days of the course here, therefore, can be regarded as a friendly concourse of fraternal spirits joining together in a common effort of a concentrated focusing of consciousness in an onward march for a common purpose.

So neither are we teachers, nor are you students. We are friends on a common platform in the interest of a great purpose, which is the purpose of all beings. We are here rather to pray to the Almighty than teach or be taught. Who are we to teach you, and who are you to be taught? These relationships have to be transcended and overcome, broken through one day or the other. It is one spirit speaking to another spirit in a super-physical communion of inward feeling of union. This achieved, yoga has been achieved. This achieved, the purpose of life is achieved, and having become successful in this, you are a success in this world.

Chapter 14

THE CENTRIPETAL COHESIVE PRESSURE OF THE SELF

All study in institutions is an art, by which knowledge we equip ourselves with the necessities to live in this world in the way the world would require us to live. We do not go on studying throughout our lives and spend all our days in schools and colleges, just as we do not go on cooking throughout our life. The cooking ends in eating. So is study and training of any kind.

We are not to be under a teacher throughout our life till we pass away from here. An apprenticeship under a teacher, a study under a Guru or a training in an institution is a preparation, and not an end in itself. So it is not that we spend all our days throughout our lives in reading and moving from place to place in search of teachers, as if that is the only thing we are expected to do. Simultaneously with our reading and studying and undergoing of training, we also live in the world.

What we call the duty of man is nothing but the art of living. We may call it the performance of a particular executive function expected of oneself, or it may be considered in any other manner from a social, political or personal angle of vision. It is essentially a friendly way of conducting oneself in the world. Yoga is friendship with things, to put it in popular language. The whole gamut of the ascent in the rungs of yoga is a graduated adjustment

of oneself with the friends that occupy this world as its inhabitants.

The world is populated by friends. The world has no enemies, just as we have no enemies within our own selves. But sometimes it is said that there are enemies even in one's own self in such difficult sayings as we have, for instance, in the Bhagavadgita where it is said the higher Self can be the friend of the lower self, and it can also be the enemy of the lower self. *Ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmana* (Gita 6.5): The Self is the friend of the self. The Self can also be the enemy of the self. These are difficult things to understand, how we can be friends and enemies to our own selves. We cannot understand how this could be possible. How could I be my own friend, and how could I have an enemy within myself?

These are secret teachings, not popular instructions. Such analogical statements apply also to everything in the world. The world is a friend and also an enemy. Though basically one cannot be either a friend or an enemy of one's own self, even so, one cannot regard the world as a friend or an enemy, due to the peculiar placement of oneself in the constitution of things. The structure of the human personality is such, or at least expected to be such, that friendship and enmity within the organism is unthinkable and, therefore, unwarranted. Likewise, the structure of things, the makeup of the world, is such that a friendly or an inimical attitude towards it is an unthinkable hypothesis.

Often religions tell us that the world is the body of God to teach us the lesson that here, within this body which ensouls the intelligence of the universe, there is no chance of any repercussion or jostling of parts within the whole. There is a grand measureless expanse in what we call the world. All study, whether it is secular or religious, scientific or aesthetic, is finally directed to the awakening of man's consciousness to that relation that exists perpetually between himself and the world. Whatever be your study, whatever be your occupation, it matters not in the end insofar as it has its vital connection with the great objective of every man, which is life itself.

The dearest thing is life, and anything that is connected with life also appears to be dear and beloved. The most beloved of objectives is one's own life. There is a struggle for protecting one's life, and every appurtenance that we seem to be gathering around ourselves is an accessory regarded as helpful in guarding one's own life and perpetuating it to the extent practicable. Life is the greatest objective. Life is an end in itself; it is not a means to another end. We do not live for something else. Everything else lives for life. All our relationships, social or otherwise, are contributory energies which sustain life, and the greatest love is the love of life. But what kind of life is it that becomes the object of love?

Many times it has been said, almost endlessly, that the greatest of loves is love of one's own self, and all other loves are conditional relations established with this unconditional love of one's own self. This is again a hard

matter, a difficult thing to grasp, because we have what are called altruistic activities, unselfish deeds, and impersonal affections, which would not permit us to accept literally that love of the self is the greatest of all loves. But this inability on our part to understand this great teaching is not a sanction to rebut it. The love of the self is certainly the greatest of loves, in spite of there being such a thing called unselfish activity. The so-called unselfishness that people parade in this world is a secret action of the self towards its own stability – a secret intelligent operation which the self manoeuvres which goes socially and politically in the name of unselfishness and public works and so on, because the greatest of public existences is the self itself. The self is not a private existence; it is a public existence. Therefore, we are impelled towards public activities.

Unselfish activities, service to the neighbour, to the friend, to the poor, to the downtrodden, to the sick, to the needy, to another, is only an impulsion from this great self which is not a private self scintillating within this little body of ours but a large public expansion which operates even behind the public works department, the social organisations, the United Nations organisations, and cosmical humanitarian activities. All these wondrous breathtaking enterprises of man which go by the name of service for the liberation of the helpless, the ignorant and the poor are within this secret brilliance called the Self.

Therefore, the love of the Self is not in any way opposed to, rather it is equivalent to, the greatest of unselfish activities conceivable because the largest

unselfishness is the Self itself, contradictory as it appears. How could the Self be unselfish? The form of the Self is selfish, but you are saying the Self is unselfish? It seems to be a sentence whose meaning cannot be grasped. The Self is the greatest of unselfish existences because it occupies everything that we call the unselfish projects of mankind.

The Self is the rudimentary status which occupies the principle objective of all living entities, perhaps even non-living ones. I have to mention again and again on other occasions that there is a tendency to maintain oneself. There is an urge within every atomic unit to maintain itself integrally, uninterrupted by external interference. This tendency, this impulse, this urge within the minutest unit conceivable in the world is the Self of that particular thing.

What is the Self? Someone put a question the other day. Where is it located, and where does it exist? It is not a substance. It is not existing anywhere. It is only the cohesive pressure that a particular point in space feels. For want of sufficient words in human language we have to go to analogies, comparisons, images and descriptive words to tell what the Self is. It is that centripetal cohesive pressure that each one feels even in an atom, by which one maintains oneself and struggles to maintain oneself. There is the struggle for existence, as scientists and biologists tell us. This struggle for existence is nothing but the struggle to maintain the selfhood of every bifurcated unit in the world.

But why is there simultaneously an urge to serve people and to be good to other people? Why this

contradiction in the attitude of anyone in the world? On the one hand, we struggle up to our teeth and nails to survive somehow or other, even if the world goes to dogs. There is sometimes an impulse of that nature for self-preservation. Somehow we have to escape, even though others may be drowning. We are not aware that others are drowning; we are struggling for a breath, and at that time we are not thinking of another's breath. This instinct of self-preservation is relentlessly operating even in the most miserable of individuals.

At the same time, there is a feeling for another. We have often a sort of impulse within us to save the other from drowning. The mother jumps into the well to save the child even if she herself is going to be destroyed. And "love thy neighbour" is a very great dictum before us. What is this loving of the neighbour? How is it practicable and meaningful at all in this relentless, devilish urge, as it were, which compels everyone to maintain oneself in an utterly selfish manner? Man is a wolf, said Thomas Hobbes, and he is a wolf who is interested only in swallowing other wolves.

This serving or loving a neighbour has no sense, but it seems to have a sense due to an equally irresistible urge within us which speaks in a different language altogether in a form of national spirit, family organisation, love of father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister. Where comes this feeling of my brother, my sister, my father, my mother, my son, my husband, my wife, my nation, my country, my brethren? Where comes this need, or even the meaning behind such urges?

The meaning arises on account of a double or a dual role which the Self plays in the context of existence. The Self is inside us as an individualised pressure towards a certainty of existence. Therefore, we are struggling for a little breath when we are inside the water, or when we are hunger-stricken we are ready even to steal a piece of bread from anyone, as we feel that we are passing away due to intense hunger. Such an immense urge within us to maintain our body, mind and spirit in unison is one side of the matter. This happens because there is an utter involvement of what we call the Self in this bodily limitation.

‘Utter’ is the only word I can use. It has gone to the extreme of involving itself in this processional concrescence of physical forces called the body, even if one knows and is certain that one day death is to come and swallow this body. Everyone knows this. It may happen tomorrow, it may happen today. No one is ignorant of this fact. In spite of this ostensible truth of the possibility of the quitting of this body any moment of time, an irresistible love for this body persists simultaneously. ‘Wonder’ is the only word that can explain this phenomenon. Such is the involvement of this Self in every cell of this body.

Every cell of your body is a dear thing for you. You will die for it. But at the same time, your heart melts at the poverty of others and the suffering of a beggar, and you cannot rebut so easily the meaning behind the great masters’ proclamations that unselfishness supersedes

selfishness and that unselfishness succeeds, while selfishness does not.

This is the other side of the matter. It persists simultaneously together with the love for one's own bodily existence because the Self which appears to be relentlessly, mercilessly, cruelly confined to this body is also relentlessly present everywhere in the universe, and this urge is equally great. There is a double pull from two different directions.

Hence, the art of yoga has been defined very wisely in two pithy statements of the Bhagavadgita as harmony and dexterity in action. *Samatvaṁ yoga ucyate* (Gita 2.48); *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* (Gita 2.50). Both things are said there. Harmony – the word 'harmony' is used without explaining what harmony means, though in an indirect way it has been explained in other passages in the Bhagavadgita. And it has also not been explained as to what is expertness in action. What is meant by saying that we have to be an expert in doing things? And what is meant by saying that we have to maintain balance? Neither of these things are clear to us. But this is yoga.

On the one hand it is *samatva*, a balancing of these two urges. *Drakṣyasi ātmany atho mayi* (Gita 4.35). "Having been established in this yoga that I am expounding to you," says Bhagavan Sri Krishna, "you will see the whole universe within Myself and in Me also." *Atmany atho mayi*: In God you will see the whole universe contained, and you will see the whole universe contained in yourself also. This is the enigma of the relationship of the world to you and to God. Sometimes

it appears as if it is hanging between the two, and at other times it appears that there is no such extraneous relationship possible.

The balance that yoga expects of us is variegated in nature. It is not of one kind only, it is of every type; every moment of time is a conflict in life. Every moment of your life you are facing a problem. If you sit, there is a problem; if you stand, there is a problem. If you look at a person, there is a problem; if you don't look, also there is a problem. If you speak there is a problem, and if you don't speak there is a problem. What a difficult thing life is! The whole of your history in this world is a history of conflicts. That is the reason why perhaps the Bhagavadgita hangs in the context of the great war of the Mahabharata, the battlefield of life. The universe is a battlefield in the sense that it is a confrontation of difficulties and a facing of problems.

But problems are meant to be solved. They are not intended to be escaped from. No one can run away from a problem. The problem is going to pursue us like the skin that is attached to our body. We cannot run away from our own skins. The difficulties of life are a part of our existence itself and, therefore, one cannot run away from existence. And even if you are going to reach the heavens, the difficulties will pursue you from the Earth. As if by a rocket, they will follow you.

Hence, yoga is a moment-to-moment action. It is not something that is done in a meditation hall or a *vihara* of the Buddhists or a temple of the Hindus or a church of the Christians. Yoga is a moment-to-moment adjustment

of yourself. Every moment you are in a different type of adjustment and *samatva*. Every moment it is a new type of adjustment because every moment you are confronting a new phase of the problem. It may not be a new problem and may not be considered as an entirely new thing that is confronting you, but it is a new colour that it takes, a new picture that is presented of the very same object, a new side of it; therefore, like a disease that may take various shapes in the course of the treatment, your problems and difficulties take different shapes as you proceed through life.

So yoga is not a stereotyped movement of a single act which has to be persisted on in a uniform manner from birth to death. It is a living process, not a mechanical adjustment, how the body livingly, organically and vitally adjusts itself from birth onwards. It is not a machine. It is a living being. You are not a mechanical complex. You are different from it in the sense that you are able to adjust yourself automatically. Your psychophysical organism is an automatic system. It does not require another operator from outside. Whenever the balance is disturbed, there is a peculiar secret apparatus kept within the organism to maintain the balance automatically. Otherwise, we will die in one second by the confrontations in life. We are able to adjust ourselves to any difficulty.

The temperature of the world goes on changing due to the climatic conditions, but our temperature is 98.4. If you go to the North Pole or to the equator, it is 98.4 only. Though the outside temperature varies, you will find you

are 98.4 only. How is it? Look at the mechanism of the body, how it adjusts itself to a problem of heat and cold that is facing it. This is an automatic action of the body.

Sometimes the mind also adjusts itself in this way by a secret apparatus of its own called defence mechanisms, known to psychological studies. If this defence mechanism is not to be there in our mind, we will die in three days by the buffets that we get and the kicks that we receive from the world. If the body were not to adjust itself to the temperature in this manner, we would have died by the temperature differences in the world. Simultaneously there is a psychological adjustment we are making. Sometimes we brush aside a problem. If we go on remembering everything – my father died, my brother died, my sister died, I have debt, what a loss, what a loss, what a loss – if we go on thinking this, then we will not live in this world.

So there is a mechanism of forgetting. The mind has a secret computer system, as it were, by which it adjusts to maintain itself. Whether we have a desire or no desire, whether we have a desire fulfilled or desire unfulfilled, whether we have an unpleasant circumstance outside us or a pleasant one, whatever it is, the mind is able to adjust itself with this condition by this defence mechanism which is comparable to the capacity of the body to adjust itself to the temperature of the world outside.

Like that, a spiritual adjustment has to be made within the soul of man, which is the art of yoga. As the body adjusts itself and the mind also adjusts itself to

some extent, though not always, the you or the I, the specific root of personality, has to adjust itself to the rootedness of everything else in the world.

Here, we find a necessity to, and a possibility of, making such adjustments – the coming together of the self within us and the self that is without, the coordination between the impulse to maintain oneself in an utterly selfish manner and an unselfish urge within us to be of service to others. The self within feels its presence in others as if by secret antennae that projects automatically by means and methods which are invisible to the eyes. So we have an intense love for ourselves, and also an intense love for other people. Simultaneously we are good people and bad people also, at the same time. We can be like chameleons, but we should not be like chameleons. We should have a harmonious outlook and a striking of the balance between the stages of the inward self and the stages of the universal Self.

Patanjali's systems of *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* are the inward adjustments that we are expected to make within the layers of our own personality, which are sometimes called *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya*, *anandamaya* – the physical, the subtle, the causal, etc. These stages, *niyama*, etc., mentioned by Patanjali are the inward harmonisations of the layers of personality which constitute a single encasement of the self. The body, the mind and the spirit, the *koshas annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya*, *anandamaya* and the Atman within are not distinct substances: here is the body, here

is the mind, here is the Atman. We cannot keep them separately in watertight compartments.

There is a gradual condensation of consciousness which is the self, together with an externalisation of it and also a simultaneous centralisation in a particular point in space and time which becomes the body-mind complex. The yoga process is a gradual melting away, as it were, of all this hard ice of bodily individuality and making it evaporate into the liquid of pure consciousness, which is attempted inwardly by *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, etc. But that is not enough. We have to commune these inwardly aligned layers of personality and selfhood with the layers of the cosmic Self.

Yoga is not over merely with these initial steps of *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*. There are the stages of samadhi, about which you must have heard. The samadhis or *samapattis* – *savitarka*, *nirvitarka*, *savichara*, *nirvichara*, *sananda*, *nirbija*, words which make no sense to an ordinary man – are indicative of the nature of the cosmical adjustments that are further on made in the stages called samadhi.

Yoga truly begins with samadhi. It does not end with samadhi. All other earlier stages are only an inward adjustment whose comparison we find in the first six chapters of the Bhagavadgita where we are told the different methods of a self-integrating process culminating in *dhyana*, as described in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

The Bhagavadgita does not end with the sixth chapter, and Patanjali's yoga does not end with *dhyana* or meditation. A great further step and a leap into the beyond has to be taken wherein and whereby the inwardly adjusted layers of the self get adjusted simultaneously with the cosmical layers of selfhood. According to the Sankhya, these cosmical layers are the five elements, the *tanmatras*, the *ahankara*, the *mahat*, the *prakriti* and the *purusha*. And according to others it may be the Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishwara, Brahman. Whatever be the nomenclature, all yoga is universal and it is not Christian or Hindu or Muslim. There is no yoga of a sectarian type. It is a cosmical endeavour and a necessity of each created being. It is a science impersonal and not a religion, again to repeat the same thing that I told you many times.

These are very interesting things, very important things, and at the same time very difficult things to remember. You are students of the Academy, hearing something from somebody, writing a few words when someone speaks, but you will note that you will not be able to remember all these things when you open the door and go out. Seventy-five percent of it would have been out from your brain. You will suddenly see a new world outside this door which has nothing to do practically, as it were, with what you have heard from me.

Here is a trick of the mind. It does not want you to succeed here. It wants you to fail miserably. Satan weeps, they say, if you succeed in withstanding his temptations

and his snares. There is an old story – biblical or otherwise, something like a grandmother’s story – that Satan asked, “Lord, when will be my salvation?” The Lord had hurled Satan into hell. Satan implores the Almighty, “When will I be relieved?”

The Lord replied, “When man will resist your temptations, you will be free.” A very hard thing! Man will not resist the temptations, so Satan will not be free.

And our temptations are not the usual stereotyped list that we find in scriptures. The inability to remember what you heard here is a temptation only, of a different type. “I cannot remember so many things you have told me. I am fed-up. It is too much for me.” Or, “Well, I am ill. I have got other things, this, that, so many problems.” We have endless excuses not to remember a good thing, endless excuses not to find time enough. The world is nothing but a bundle of excuses.

So friends of the Academy, God bless you for this day. This is sufficient for you.

Chapter 15

AWAKENING TO THE DESTINY OF THE UNIVERSE

Perhaps I have mentioned sometime that the first thought that occurs to our mind when we get up in the morning will tell us something about ourselves. The basic substance of our life persists and calls for our attention as the first thought in the morning. Many times we are so muddled in our minds that there would be no time to find out what the first thought has been today, for instance. Many of us may not even remember what we thought when we woke up in the morning because the mind flows like a series of waves one following the other, giving no rest and respite for the earlier phase.

A disciplined mind will be able to keep a watch over itself. It is only the undisciplined, chaotic thoughts that clamour with a great noise without having much meaning behind their demands. When there is a shout from a large mob, we do not know what each person is speaking. Likewise, there is generally a mob of requirements when our mind begins to work.

Often our thoughts are like a medley of forest growth, and not a well-ordered garden where everything finds its own place in an artistic manner. Our thoughts are rarely artistic. They are a muddle and a jungle mostly, so that any thought can occur at any time for any reason whatsoever, and for any purpose. This situation is a specimen of an undisciplined mind that can say anything

and think anything at any time under an impulse, whether internal or external. A control over the processes of thought requires a great program to be chalked out and adhered to in our day-to-day living. An earnestness on our part plays a very important role in achieving success in this direction.

A time will come by this process of disciplining the mind that you will have only a set of thoughts which alone will occur to your mind, and extraneous, irrelevant and unsubstantial ideas will not find a place there. Just as a person who is embarking upon a particular project has a set of ideas concerning that project only and no other thought can enter his mind on account of the intensity of the upsurge of ideas concerning the project, likewise, the intensity of a clarified conception of the goal of life will take the upper hand, and ideas and thoughts concerning these procedures to be adopted in the achievement of the goal will persist again and again, even in the middle of stray thoughts that may occasionally come due to past habit.

It does not mean that every one of us goes to bed with a peaceful mind, whatever be our effort to achieve this state. Some sort of an anxiety or a pending work occupies the attention of the mind, and the greatest bondage is pending work. To go to bed with something that has to be done the next morning is a thing on which one has to bestow sufficient attention. The wisdom of life, whatever the nature of it be, calls for the recognition of our true status in this world. Any sort of over-estimation is unwarranted in a world of this kind. Great men have

come and gone in a trice, and the world has its own legal operations in respect of every one of us.

Really, we have no pending work. Such a thing does not exist, really speaking. But we involve ourselves in a sort of responsibility which we take on our head as a heavy load for reasons which even we ourselves cannot easily explain, and they tell upon us physically, socially, psychologically, and even ethically.

Every insistent demand in life may be regarded as a duty that we have to perform. The word 'insistent' is to be underlined here, and it is up to us to find out what it is that is so insistent. An insistent demand is one whose neglect may prove detrimental even to the achievement of our goal in some indirect manner, like a serious illness which is ignored. Though illness may not have a direct connection with the great goal of life, it has an indirect relationship which is obvious.

There are small things in life which may miss our attention due to the great exuberance of aspiration for God. But that would be like the fate of a managing director of a huge factory concerning himself only with the large output that he is expecting from his organisation, forgetting that the personnel in the factory are not reliable and the machines are not in order. Such an enthusiasm would not be part of the wisdom of life. The mechanism of living may be requiring repairs of various types, and though in extraordinary circumstances an overwhelming love for God may set right all matters by the operation of a law that does not belong to this world, normally one should not expect that

law to descend upon us instantly. That is a miracle which can take place, but we should not expect that it should take place every moment. Normally speaking, not taking into consideration these extraordinary conditions and supernormal possibilities, common sense and vigilance are expected of a seeker.

It is absolutely essential for every serious student of yoga to have a thoroughgoing systematic minutiae of the daily routines because a progressive following of a systemised routine for the day builds up the strength of one's personality, even as breakfast or lunch or dinner taken at regular hours contribute to the health of the body, while this benefit will not accrue if we are irregular in the intake of the food. Anything that is regular and systematised has the characteristic of strengthening itself inwardly, and the system that I am referring to in the daily routine mainly refers to a specified time to be allotted for a particular phase of sadhana such as *swadhaya* or study, *japa* or meditation or even relaxation, which also may be regarded as a part of your daily routine.

The great clarity in your mind regarding the goal that you wish to achieve in life will also suggest at the same time the appurtenances that you have to gather in this life for the purpose of the achievement. When you wish to build a house, you draw a plan first. You do not suddenly order some cement and bricks, thinking that a house has to be built, but not knowing what sort of material would be required in quantity or quality. If you build a house, you have a plan first; an architectural

drawing is prepared, and then on the basis of this plan you contemplate the further requirements of the project – the quantity of the material, the nature of the material, the personnel who have to work, the expenses that you have to incur, and such other relative factors.

Something like that is this great building of the edifice of your own life. You cannot live a satisfactory life in this world unless it is planned properly. An unplanned life cannot be called life at all. It is just existence. And the plan of life would be the shape that your life would take in all its details in light of the goal towards which the life is directed. The nature of the building that you are required to build will depend upon the thing that you want to do in that building. Is it going to be a factory, a chapel, a temple, residential quarters, a hostel, or a hospital? What is it? The kind of thing for which the building is meant will also decide the nature of the plan and all that follows in the project.

Likewise, the purpose for which you are living in this world will also decide the way in which you have to live in the world. How should I live? This question can be answered by putting another question: Why are you living? What is the purpose of your being here at all? The purpose of your life will tell you the way in which you have to live. And when you know the way in which you are expected to live in light of the purpose that is to be achieved, this will also decide the details of every aspect such as the social, the physical, the psychological, the ethical, and the spiritual.

Your needs in life are the details of your life. Many times it appears to us that we are involved in a big conspectus of unintelligible relations and needs which cannot be tabulated in a list. What do you want? If you put a question to a person, he will not be able to give an answer immediately. What do I want? He will be simply drowned in the question itself. This feeling that you are getting drowned in the nature of this question arises because the mind is not clear as to the circumstances of its own life. The main difficulty is that we do not know why we are living here. Every other difficulty follows from this difficulty.

Many feel many things in their own minds. "I work because I have to take care of my family. I have to take care of my family because it is recorded in the scriptures that it is one's duty to take care of one's family." Here the matter ends. The whole question is answered by this little statement, "I have to serve my family, I have to take care of my husband, my wife, my children. I have to work for my nation, my country. I have to work for humanity, my brother. I live for this purpose." This is a simple, obvious and offhand answer that can come out from anyone's mind, but this is an untrained answer. This answer comes from a mind which has not been educated properly in the art of existence. It is a prosaic mind, not a poetic one.

This training that the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy conducts for the benefit of people is only to introduce a sort of educational discipline into the minds of people, and not merely to thrust some wisdom from outside,

which cannot be done. It is a sort of properly gearing the mind and enabling it to move along the required track by simultaneously making it possible for it to condition its own operations in the light of the direction in which it is moving.

We are moving all in one direction, in some direction. The world moves in one direction, and everything that is within the world also is moving in some direction. This is perhaps what is meant by the term 'evolution'. Evolution is the direction in which the world, and everything that is in the world, takes. Though it is known that there is some sort of a direction in the movement of the world and its contents, it is not known what this direction is. The philosophers of evolution merely mention that there is evolution, and there is a movement from one species to another with a larger organisational setup in the advancing species. This is some sort of a statement in regard to the direction the world is taking. But where does the evolution stop? Where does it end?

Latterly, we had many evolutionist philosophers in the West who contemplated the possibilities of the direction which the world is taking in its movements. In India, people had declared that the world is moving towards God. Man exists for the sake of the Realisation of God. This has been declared. But it was not so easily declared in the West because doubt and wonder were the beginnings of philosophy there, and not so much intuition and vision as we seem to be having as the background of philosophical disquisitions in India. The

darshana of India is a vision of truth, but Greek philosophy or German philosophy did not begin with an intuition of the values of life but a scepticism, a doubting of every possibility and eventuality and also, in the case of Greek philosophy particularly, it began with the wonder of the world. There seems to be a miraculous secret operating behind the systematic movements of nature.

The evolutionary doctrines, which are not the subject of our discussion now, seem to indicate that the world is taking a direction and it is not merely blindly moving. It is not true that the world is blind or is blindfolded. It is an intelligent something. The way in which it is very dextrously manufacturing beautiful flowers in the Valley of Flowers in the Himalayas, the way in which almost unrecognised, unwanted butterflies are carrying artistic patterns on their bodies, the way in which systematically, correct to the second, the planets are moving around the sun, the way in which the parts of the body are miraculously collaborating among themselves for a purpose no one knows, and such other umpteen endless countless instances of mysterious intelligences operating behind the events of nature seem to prove that the world is not blind. It is not an ignorant, inert mass. The mathematics of the Earth which moves around the sun and rotates on its axis is more precise than the intelligence of the best mathematician in the world. It is such precision, such exactness – not exactness to the minute, not to the second, but even to the hundredth or thousandth fraction of a second. They saw all these

things cannot be explained if we are living in an unintelligent, meaningless, blind world.

This intelligence which manifests itself in the progressive evolution of the species of various types seems to be working for a great purpose which is secretly hidden but sometimes manifests itself even before our own eyes under special circumstances.

Thus, a great need seems to be pressing upon the mind of every person in the world to educate himself or herself in the direction of a learning which will enlighten the mind as to what this direction is. Academicians have called this sort of learning as philosophy, especially Plato who considered philosophy as an indispensable science of life – indispensable because no one can forego, no one can avoid, no one can feel it is unnecessary. It is the only necessary discipline for every person in the world.

People such as Plato felt that philosophy is the supreme science or the art of awakening the mind of man to the destiny of the universe. This awakening, this discipline which may be regarded as the essence of true education and culture, will also direct the daily routine of our life. Otherwise, our daily routine will go on changing according to the whims and fancies of our mind, the emotions and the frustrations of life, and the like.

So I come back to the point that there is a necessity to maintain a daily routine which will be consonant with the purpose which you are working for with a little meal that you eat and the water that you drink and the activities in which you are engaged. You are not engaging yourself in the enterprises of life for nothing. You are

neither working for man, nor for your father or mother, nor for anybody in this world. You are working for the fulfilment of the purpose of the universe, which looks like something which involves your relationship with your father, mother, relations, friends, and what not. All these relationships appear to be a part and parcel of our duty in life on account of the fact that fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, brethren and all these people are involved, included in, this great evolutionary urge of the universe.

Yet, it has to be remembered that this principle purpose is not merely a relativistic attendance in respect of our outward connections, but is an onward or upward movement. We don't know whether it is onward or upward, or it is neither or both. It is this central purpose which should form the substance of education. If this essential content or core of education is missed, education becomes a corpse which has the structure of the human body but it is worth nothing, fit for cremation or burial.

The educated person is a happy person; this is what Socrates said, and anyone can say, but education today makes one miserable, for reasons which each educated person knows. The world begins to present itself as a true reality after our education is over. Until then we are small saplings, knowing nothing of the world. When our educational career is over, we find ourselves in hot water because the world then looks at us in its true colour which was hidden from view on account of our immersion in books, and also because of our happy

dependence on people who took care of us, whom we regarded as our sole support, and we had no worries of any kind. When our education is over, those who helped us in education tell us, “Now you stand on your own legs.” Then we find our legs are weak and we cannot stand, because strength has not been imparted to the limbs by the education that we have been given. This is unfortunate, and all ministers of education are crying hoarse on this point, finding no solution to it. But a solution has to be found.

So seekers of truth, practicants of yoga and those who are dedicated to spiritual living are expected to awaken themselves to this great point, namely, a persistent maintenance of the consciousness of the purpose for which one exists and lives and does anything in the world. This enables seekers to maintain the daily routine.

When you get up in the morning, what are you supposed to do? What is your occupation going to be throughout the day today, for instance, from morning till evening? Though your present occupation today will have some connection with the empirical associations of yourself in society, it has to be grounded finally in the purpose for which this empirical association also exists and persists.

You have empirical and social requirements which call your attention insistently every day. Yet, notwithstanding this, this immediate requirement is finally rooted in another requirement which conditions this immediate requirement. An empirical necessity is conditioned by a transcendent necessity. The heaven

conditions the Earth. All that happens in the world, they say, has happened first in the heavens, and then it has descended into the world. We belong to all the realms, not merely to this Earth. So any manifestation of a particular event in the physical realm is supposed to be a descent into a grosser form of a subtle occurrence which has already taken place in ethereal form in the higher realms. As medical people say, diseases occur inside first, and then they manifest themselves outside. The fruit ripens inside and then ripens outside later on. So the central core behind the urges for any activity or performance in life is something transcendent, and then it appears as an empirical occurrence outside in space and time when it descends into our eyes.

With these associated ideas, you will be able to chalk out a program of your life and a program of your day. The program of the day, of any particular day, is one link in the chain of the great development of your own life. What you wish to achieve in your life is to be achieved in part, in some proportion, in one particular day. If the whole of your life can be regarded as a big body of your life, every day is a cell or a part of this body. Hence, whatever I do today and whatever I do any day will bear an inextricable connection towards the fulfilment of the final purpose.

Every day we take a bath, we go to sleep, we take meals, we go for a walk, we relax in various ways, we study books, and we have many other occupations. All these are intended to maintain a social and personal health, which is the aim behind them. And this

immediate requirement and necessity of ours has again a purpose behind it which is superior to it, transcendent to it, and beyond it. So the highest one conditions the immediately following one, and the immediately following one conditions the next following one and finally, even the little minute things in the world are conditioned by the final will of God. Towards this end we are moving, and this would give us an idea of the nature of the daily routine.

The spiritual diary of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj is perhaps, to my knowledge, a prescription that has occurred for the first time by a great adept in yoga. A self-checking is what is made possible by the maintenance of this spiritual diary. If you have seen the type of diary that is prescribed here by the founder of this institution, you will be able to chalk out a similar, equivalent diary for your own purpose, suited to your own predilection and the way in which you are living, etc.

You know how carefully business people maintain accounts. Every day they are conscious what transactions are taking place, and every day they close their accounts with a clear idea of the financial position: Is it an asset or is it a liability? If it is an asset or a liability, they know how it has come. And the nature of the assets or the liabilities of a particular day during the close of the accounts in the evening will tell what they have to do tomorrow. How careful people are in political fields and in business fields! Such is the caution that one has to exert by an assessment of one's performances during a

particular day. As it is important to note the nature of the thought that occurs to you early in the morning, it is also essential to guard yourself about the thought that goes with your mind at the end of the day.

A noble, sublime thought should be carried with the mind when it goes to sleep. The future depends on the present, is often told us. The last thought determines the future life, say the scriptures. Often the last thought of today may be really the last thought. It may not occur tomorrow. And if it occurs tomorrow, well, God be thanked for it.

We continue this process in this manner by conducting ourselves in this disciplined way, struggling and striving our best to see that the basic or fundamental thought persists through the details of thought which are connected with our daily duties. It is true that many of us may have to perform many types of duty due to the kind of occupation with which are connected. It is not only one form of work that we have to do; the form, the type, the kind may go on changing almost every hour in the case of a person who is very busy in many enterprises. Yet, with all these busy involvements, a seriously concerned person should be able to find time to withdraw himself or herself every day for a maximum period of time. I have used the words 'maximum period of time' without saying whether it is one hour or two hours, or three hours, because it depends upon the quality of the thought, rather than the quantity.

The quality of your withdrawal and concentration on the great purpose of life should be so intense that it

should be able to overwhelm any kind of impact that may tell upon your system by contact with your social existence in the world. Due to your existence in this world in the way in which you are living, influences impinge upon you every moment of time, and these influences dash upon you like waves in the ocean every moment, almost. But the quality of your withdrawal, though not the quantity, should be so intense that it should be able to withstand the onslaught of these dashing waves in the ocean of life. And it is up to every one of us to find out what amount of time may have to be allotted for this purpose of constructively guarding ourselves against the onslaughts and vicissitudes of outward life. It is not that everyone has to sit meditating for three hours. If it is an advanced and strong mind, even a few minutes of withdrawal would be sufficient.

But who has got such a strong mind? So you may have to conduct yourself in this way for a little protracted time, preferably in the morning when you have not yet commenced the duties of the day, and also in the evening when you have retired from the day's work. It is hard for a common man to maintain an equilibrium of thinking in the midst of heavy duties which come like a flood upon one's mind. But gradual practice and persistent effort will give you such strength that you will never forget the basic factor which underlies the outward movements of life's names and forms.

So today I have concerned myself principally with this necessity on the part of every one of us to maintain a self-checking diary. You may call it spiritual diary or any

kind of diary, for the matter of that. We have many weaknesses, and these are dangerous things. The enemy can enter into our fortress of sadhana by the ingress of these weaknesses. They have to be guarded with a powerful sentry, with an army of competent personnel, with tremendous discrimination, study, *satsanga* with great saints and sages, etc. Sometimes you are not strong enough. Then align yourself with a strong power if you have not got enough strength in your own self. Likewise, when you feel that you are not in a position to guard yourself through the avenues of your weaknesses, then you have to be in the company of a great person. That is alignment, as they call it in politics. You get aligned with a powerful source, and then have no fear from enemies who are likely to attack through these weaknesses in your personality. This alignment should be with a great person, a Guru preferably; otherwise, you should have such strength that you can yourself face all these eventualities.

We have to be sincerely conscious of the weaknesses of our mind and our emotions. We should not imagine that we have no weaknesses and no desires. This kind of patting oneself on the back will do no good afterwards. We can get on in life, but we cannot get on finally because these weaknesses are like deep sores in one's own soul. What is the good of imagining that there are no weaknesses? Who is benefitted by that? This is a kind of self-deception and also a deception of the public. Well, it can go on for some time, but it will not help us for a long time.

The acceptance of weakness is not a weakness in itself. Many times you do not want to accept a weakness, thinking that it itself is a weakness – which is not so, because thereby you try to find a recipe for this weakness, like the acceptance of an illness. If there is a chronic illness, what is the good of hiding it? The exposure of this illness will also be a good avenue for finding a remedy or recipe or medicine for it. Many times we may be able to find a remedy ourselves for our weaknesses, but this requires sometimes, though not always, the assistance of a competent master.

Deep meditation on God is the final medicine for weaknesses of every type. God is the greatest Guru – *gurur brahma, gurur vishnu, gurur devo maheshwara*. We are born with human weaknesses which are the specific characteristics of the species of man. Every man has a weakness which is common to every man. It is not the weakness of this person or that person. It is a weakness of humanity as such. This cannot be overcome by human means only. A human weakness cannot be remedied by human means. It requires a superhuman means, and this superhuman means is *japa*, meditation, *swadhaya*, among many other things.

Satsanga is the supreme thing. Of all great advantages of spiritual life, *satsanga* stands supreme. Everything comes afterwards. Nothing can compare to the company of a great man. All other things that you do come afterwards. The protection that you have, the satisfaction that you feel and the energy that enters into you in the company of a great personality surpasses every other

advantage that may accrue to you by your own personal sadhana. So wherever there is an opportunity of *satsanga*, it should not be missed. As long as possible this should continue, and you should hunt for the opportunities of this *satsanga*.

Added to it is *japa*. With sincere meditations and prayers to God to illumine your mind, humbly surrender yourself before the great Almighty and offer your supplication to this great Being: “I am at your feet. Help me.” And help shall descend through the Guru, or directly through any miraculous source from the great Creator who has millions of eyes and who sees you every minute, inwardly and outwardly.

And so, life is blessed. It is not a curse, as many may imagine under difficult circumstances. The kingdom of heaven is a blessed area, and we are in it. So God’s grace and blessings go with you all.